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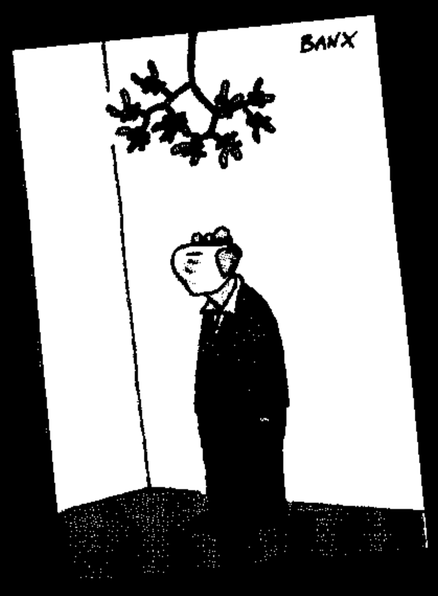

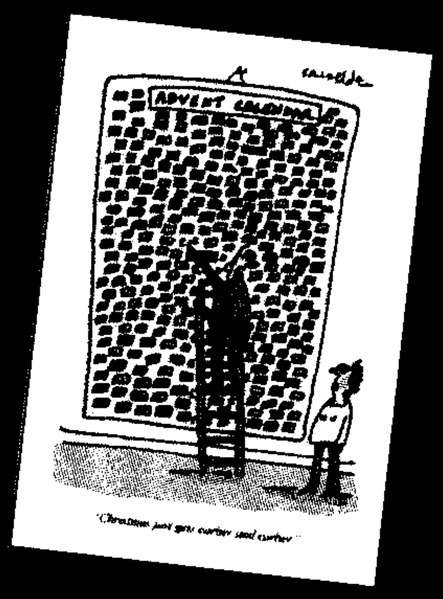

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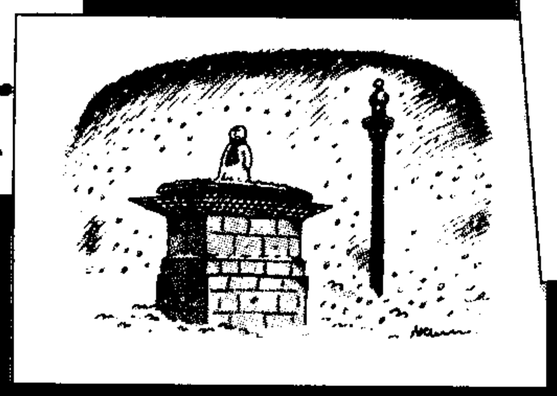

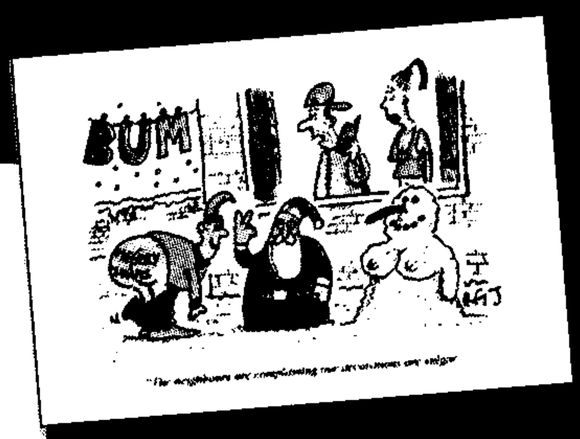

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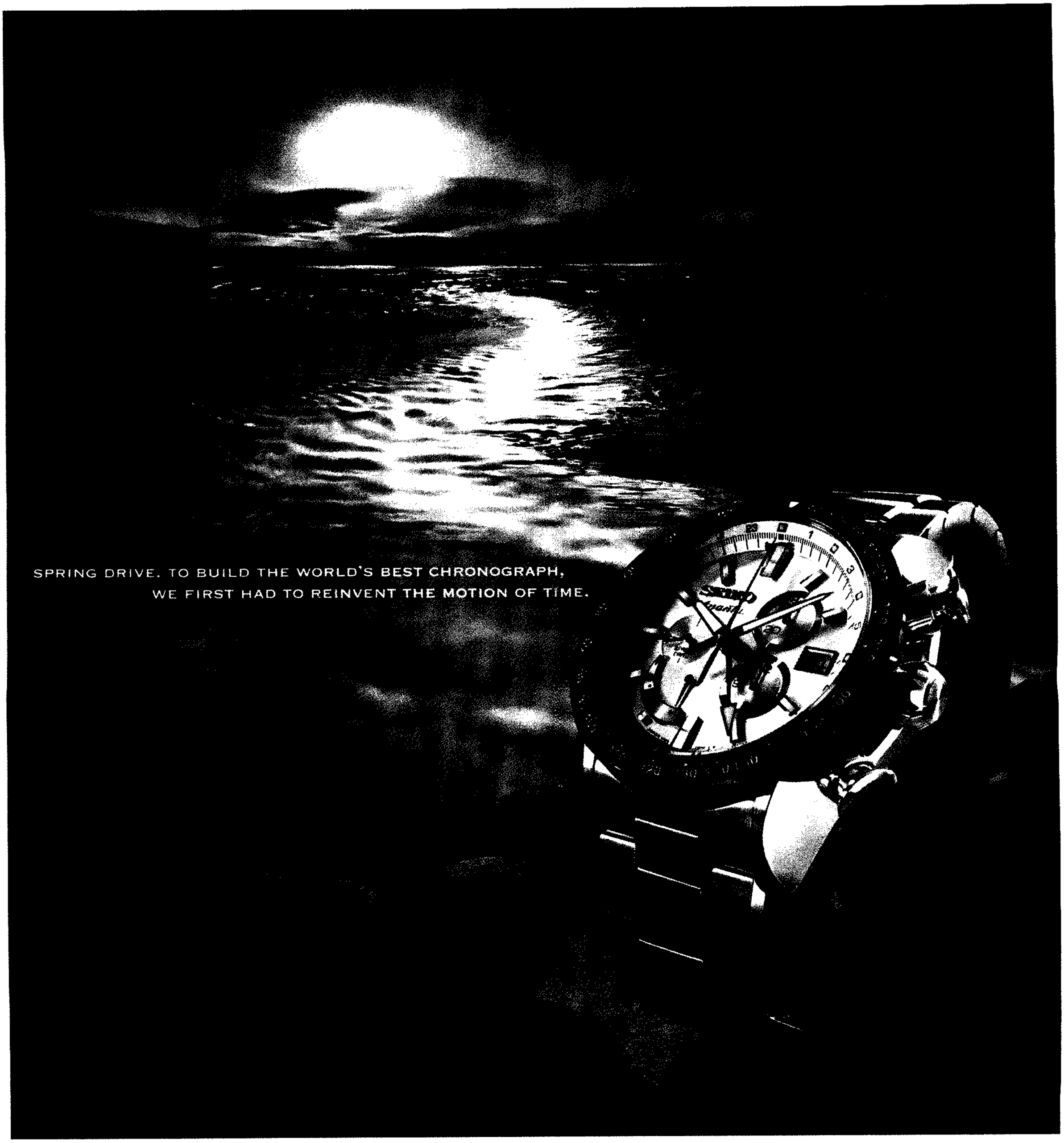

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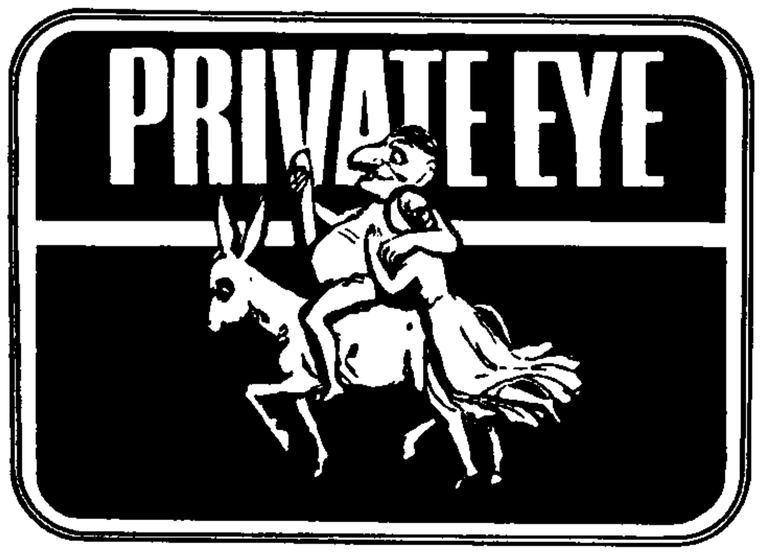

Tricks and treats

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BONUS BALLS

THAT clampdown on bonuses at state-owned RBS in full...

Feb 2009: Chancellor Alistair Darling announces "a cultural change, moving away from short-term bonuses which have caused so much damage... the bank is committed to in the future making sure that instead of cash payments they're paid in the form of capital so that the employees have a long-term incentive to do the right thing..."

October 2009: RBS appoints 11 new investment bankers on guaranteed cash bonuses totaling £5m.

*"I'm a banker – you give **me** treats"*

NUMBER CRUNCHING

-5.9% Contraction in UK economy during current recession

+7.4% Average rise in salaries for bosses of FTSE 100 companies in last year

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ABC

JUST FANCY THAT!

"ASKED if the prime minister had watched *Question Time* and asked for his views on it, the PMS [prime minister's spokesman] said that the prime minister had not watched *Question Time*. Asked if the prime minister would watch *Question Time* on the internet, the PMS said that he was not sure whether the Prime Minister would have time during his busy schedule to watch the programme this weekend. Asked if the prime minister gave any reason as to why he didn't watch the programme, the PMS said that the prime minister rarely got to watch *Question Time* due to other pressures on his time."
– Downing Street Press Briefing, 23 October

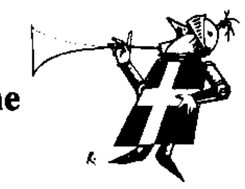
"Sarah and I always try to watch the *X Factor* – it's a big hit in our family. We were sorry to see your *X Factor* journey come to an end and wish you well for the future." – *Gordon Brown in one of many personal letters he has written to unsuccessful X Factor contestants, 7 October*

TRAFIGURA did dodge one mention in the Commons last week when, at international development questions, Labour's David Taylor raised the public development fund CDC's spending of taxpayers' money.

The "backbencher of the year" was poised to lament CDC's connections to the "loathsome Trafigura", following the report in *Eye* 1246 of the firm's and the fund's co-investment in dubious mining company Anvil. But speaker Bercow decided he'd heard enough questionable investments when Taylor mentioned "shopping malls" and truncated the "war and peace" question, sparing Trafigura the further ignominy of being linked with CDC.

● *Another bum CDC deal, p28.*

EYE TOLD YOU SO (1)



SO, justice secretary Jack Straw has been forced to extend his investigation into the "ghosting out" of troublesome and troubled prison inmates ahead of inspections to make the jails appear calm and well-run.

When the *Eye* first broke the story at the beginning of September and reported that governors in two London jails had been caught red-handed swapping prisoners, we said that, contrary to Ministry of Justice assurances, the scam was not confined to Pentonville and Wandsworth.

Now sources suggest the investigation will reveal that not only were other governors of prisons moving inmates too, but that they were using other tactics to manipulate inspection targets. One wheeze to make their drug problems appear less severe was to carry out more random testing in "drug-free wings" where they knew they would obtain clear results.

Another ploy brought to inspectors' attention was moving out inmates who had made complaints so that they could not be pursued. And governors have also apparently been manipulating figures for the number of activities taking place, making inmates appear more usefully employed than they are.

SO MUCH for a new era of responsibility in the City under the Tories.

The crack team of bankers and consultants announced by George Osborne to overhaul financial regulation includes a certain Nick Prettejohn, who as chief executive of Prudential presided over a massive payment protection insurance mis-selling scandal between 2005 and 2007 at its Egg division. Some 40 percent of sales calls broke the rules.

Then, last year, Prettejohn outraged the Treasury select committee by admitting that the Pru had used £1.6bn of policy holders' money, in the shape of so-called "inherited estates", to compensate the victims of its endowment mis-selling, rather than making shareholders who had profited from the scam foot the bill.

THE Communication Workers Union may be pressing ahead with its strike action, but one thing its members do look likely to deliver is their long-threatened cut in their funding of the Labour party.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes issued the warning on the BBC's *Politics Show* in response to the government's backing of the Royal Mail in the dispute.

And no wonder. Since 2001 the CWU has given Labour £5,313,192.60p. But does it get a thank you? No. Instead Gordon Brown has described the strikes as "unnecessary"; business secretary Lord Mandelson has chastised the CWU for embarking on a "suicidal course of action"; and City minister Lord Myners has accused the union of putting "livelihoods and jobs at risk". What ingratitude!

"WE should not be ashamed of offering compensation in an internationally competitive market," insisted Goldman Sachs vice-chairman Lord Griffiths last week at the panel discussion where he notoriously insisted that "inequality is a way of achieving greater opportunity and prosperity for all".

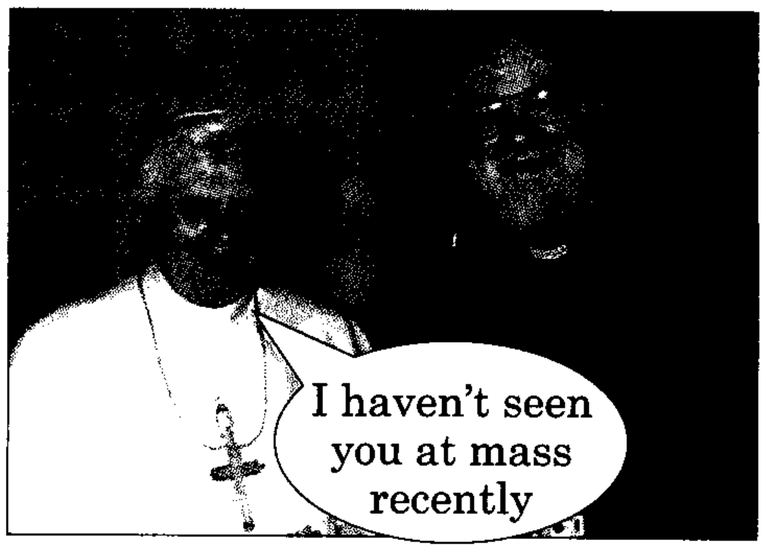
Lest we forget, Goldman Sachs was slated in a National Audit Office report in June for its work for the Treasury during the collapse of Northern Rock when it collected a £4m "success" bonus – "even though there was no clear definition of success".

Fearing that Lord Griffiths had not done the best PR job for his bank, chief executive Michael Sherwood then penned an op-ed piece in the *Times*, arguing that bankers' exorbitant pay had played no part in the credit crunch. "Blame bad managers, not the banking system," declared Sherwood. "Our reputation depends on picking and paying the best to do it. We rely on each other, not on any expectation of outside assistance."

What he omitted to mention was that Goldman certainly did benefit from outside assistance during last year's meltdown – in the form of a $10bn bailout from US treasury secretary Hank Paulson, who just happened to be Goldman's former CEO and remained remarkably chummy with his old employer.

Still, maybe we can rely on chairman Peter Sutherland to keep a tight rein on paypackets. Or not. In addition to his Goldman job, Sutherland sat as a non-executive director on the board of Royal Bank of Scotland for the past seven years where he did nothing to prevent the colossally-remunerated Fred "the Shred" Goodwin from causing carnage.

CATHOLICS WOO CHURCH OF ENGLAND



Street of Shame

"FACING angry heckling, Mr Griffin was forced to deny that he had said black men 'walk like monkeys'," cheered the *Mail* after the BNP leader's appearance on *Question Time*, during which he angrily denounced "outrageous lies in the *Daily Mail* today".

And how did *Daily Mail* cartoonist Mahood choose to illustrate the government's proposed changes to the immigration system last year? With a picture of two, er, monkeys, one telling the other: "We're bound to be sent back."

TV comic and lothario Russell Brand is hardly a political sage, so why did the *Sun* give him a two-page spread last Thursday to hold forth about BNP leader Nick Griffin?

"Comic Russell Brand has been watching with interest the developments leading to the British National Party's *Question Time* debut on BBC1," explained the *Sun*. "While working on projects in Los Angeles, he has been forming his own opinion on whether the racist party should appear on the flagship show."

And what was Brand's stunning conclusion? The Beeb, his old employer before it sacked him over Sachsgate, was "right" to ask Griffin on to the programme and the BNP are "nitwits". Perish the thought that this was more about finding a convenient way for Brand and his agent John Noel to schmooze the BBC – and portray the TV comic in a positive light as he struggles to rehabilitate his career.

"MULTI-culturalism has reached new heights in the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Newham," announced the *Sunday Telegraph* on 18 October.

"The two councils have instructed all state schools under their control to close for the annual celebrations of Eid-Ul-Fitr, Diwali and Guru Nanak's birthday, in addition to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter."

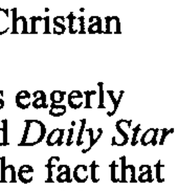
What a scoop! And as such it was eagerly followed up by the *Mail*, *Express* and *Daily Star* – none of which managed to record the fact that this has been council policy since the 1980s, either.

TRADITIONS remain alive and well at the *Sun* under new editor Dominic Mohan.

Monday's paper revealed that "Baby P's vile mum has struck up a grim friendship with House of Horrors monster Rose West… But a source at HM Prison Low Newton last night denied reports that they were having a lesbian affair: 'To say they're having a sexual relationship is wide of the mark'."

And where did these erroneous reports appear? In sister paper *The News of the World*, naturally.

EYE TOLD YOU SO (2)



"Despite condemnation from police, lawyers and scientists, not to mention widespread concern among Labour backbenchers, the government is pressing ahead with plans to flog off the sensitive and lucrative Forensic Science Service, a world leader in DNA analysis and involved in 90 percent of police forensic work in Britain." – *Private Eye, 20 August 2004*

"Forensic Science Service Set For Sale"– *Daily Mail, 24 October 2009*

CARTER-RUCKING HELL

MESSRS Carter-Fuck, London's most vainglorious solicitors, tout for business by boasting of their matchless skills in "reputation management".

After the Trafigura affair, which has put them on a par with Nick Griffin and Jan Moir as the most reviled people in Britain, potential clients may wonder about that. If Carter-Fuck can't even manage its own reputation, why should anyone else entrust theirs to it?

At last Wednesday's Commons debate on super-injunctions, MPs queued up to denounce the Carter-Fuckwits. "In past years, people who sought to gag parliament or were held to have behaved inappropriately in relation to parliament were brought before the Bar of the House and in some cases sent to prison," thundered Denis MacShane MP. "Do we not need to see Carter-Ruck's partners before the Bar of the House to apologise publicly for this attempt to suborn parliamentary democracy?"

Still striving to defend the indefensible, Adam Tudor of Carter-Fuck issued a press release. "Despite suggestions to the contrary in certain quarters," he harrumphed, "neither Trafigura nor Carter-Ruck has at *any* time improperly sought to stifle or restrict debate in parliament or the reporting thereof."

Yeah, right. Perhaps he's already forgotten the letter he sent to the *Guardian* on 12 October after learning that the paper intended to report a parliamentary question tabled by Paul Farrelly MP which mentioned the secret Trafigura injunction. "The threatened publication referring to the existence of the injunction would… place the *Guardian* in contempt of court," he wrote. "Accordingly, please confirm by immediate return that the publications threatened will not take place." What was that, if not an attempt to stifle the reporting of parliamentary proceedings? It certainly stifled the *Guardian*, at least for a day – though the *Eye* went ahead and published the MP's question.

Later that week Tudor sent a letter to the Speaker, John Bercow, with copies to all MPs and peers, repeating his claim that the *Guardian* would have been in breach of the injunction had it quoted Farrelly's question, even though it was on the order paper and on parliament's website. He also argued that a parliamentary debate on the subject should not go ahead because the case concerning the injunction was still *sub judice*. If that wasn't an attempt to "restrict debate in Parliament", what is? Ah yes, Tudor would say, but it wasn't "improper". Furious MPs thought otherwise. A day later, Carter-Fuck bowed to the inevitable and agreed to lift the injunction.

Ironically none of this would have happened but for Carter-Fuck's decision to go for a super-injunction, whose very existence cannot be reported. When Farrelly submitted his question, the clerks in the table office did their customary checks on high court records to see if the case was *sub judice*, in which case they would have ruled it out of order. They found no record of the Trafigura injunction because it had been "anonymised" as *RJW & SJW v. The Guardian & Persons Unknown* – and so Farrelly's question was allowed.

Carter-Fuck can expect plenty more grief over coming weeks, as the select committee on culture, media and sport prepares its report on libel and privacy. Giving evidence to the committee in May, alongside Ian Hislop, Alan Rusbridger of the *Guardian* said that he hadn't been hit with the kind of chilling super-injunction that the *Eye*'s editor called "censorship by judicial process".

Rusbridger has now written to the committee chairman, John Whittingdale MP, confessing that he spoke too soon: "This process of casually granting these secrecy orders appears to be spreading." When Trafigura obtained its high court order, he reveals, the judge was told that the *Guardian* must be muzzled from publishing *anything* about the injunction because otherwise it might run a story accusing the company of, er, muzzling the press.

Rusbridger appends a chronology of the "prolonged campaign of legal harassment" by Carter-Fuck against the *Grauniad* and its reporter David Leigh, but his brief summary omits some of the liveliest exchanges. According to other documents seen by the *Eye*, in May this year Leigh sent Tudor an email accusing them of bullying and misleading the *Guardian*. "We shall continue to put allegations to you prior to possible publication, in order to continue to behave as responsible journalists," Leigh concluded. "But will you behave as responsible solicitors?"

Tudor fired off a letter to Rusbridger protesting at this implicit slur on his firm's integrity, which "verges on the hysterical". It was, he wailed, "extraordinary" and "unprecedented" that a journalist "can feel it even remotely appropriate to behave in this manner".

Worse was to come. In August, one of Carter-Fuck's spies told them about a Powerpoint presentation given by Leigh at the Centre for Investigative Journalism's summer school. Apparently he had shown the audience photographs of three Carter-Fuck partners (including Adam Tudor) and described them as "bullies". He had then told the audience: "I don't want you to think I'm being completely unbalanced when I say I hate these people. But I do hate these particular people."

"What this episode illustrates yet again," Tudor complained to the *Guardian* legal department, "is that Mr Leigh's actions are not those of a rational, responsible journalist." Henceforth, he declared, Carter-Fuck would not engage in correspondence with Leigh, since "we can no longer be expected to tolerate his increasingly unreasonable (and, at times, abusive) approach".

Poor diddums!

SUN showbiz editor Gordon Smart agonised last year over whether to break the story of the collapse of Guy Ritchie's marriage, given that he and Ritchie were such great mates.

"I have weighed it up, and I think… that when the dust settles we'll be able to have a pint and it won't even be mentioned," he told the *Independent* at the time. "Somebody from the paper rang me last night and said, 'Do you think you should have your name on it? Is this going to wind Guy up?' And I said 'I've got to do it, it's my job, he'll understand'."

Fast forward a year to this October, and it has just emerged that a story Smart was gulled into printing in his Bizarre column this spring – about Ritchie receiving a black eye while drunkenly juggling with cutlery at a restaurant – was entirely fabricated. It's possible the great friendship (they once sat next to each other at a film premiere) may now be faltering for the story has just disappeared from the *Sun's* website.

"We've renamed it to try to attract kids out of doors"

DOESN'T thirsty Will Lewis have enough on his plate – or indeed in his brimming tankard – at the moment, what with attending a three-month management course at Harvard while remaining editor-in-chief of the Telegraph Media Group?

Apparently not. Lewis has just joined LinkedIn, the online business networking service. In his contact settings it says that he's looking for "career opportunities" and "new ventures". What can he mean?

AS staff on Richard "Dirty" Desmond's Express Newspapers titles sit nervously waiting to be sent to the gallows, they have received further confirmation that redundancy really is the end of the road.

When Dirty Des and his wife Janet toured the office on a Saturday afternoon recently, the chairman was surprised to notice former *Daily Star Sunday* night editor Dave Harbord, who was made redundant some years ago in one of Desmond's annual culls. The explanation that Harbord occasionally comes back to provide holiday cover for the skeleton staff on the paper did not go down well: Des told editor Gareth Morgan to get rid of him and never have him back. At a time when Desmond is looking to save £3.5m on his editorial budget, he is now going to have to fly someone down from the Broughton office, house them in a hotel and pay their expenses for three separate weeks before Christmas.

THE *Indescribablyboring*'s technology correspondent Rhodri Marsden has a notoriously high opinion of his own intellect, and is well known for flying into a rage at any suggestion that he might be fallible. But even by his standards, the former boyband wannabe's most recent outburst was a corker.

In an *Indie* column on 13 October, Marsden confused the notion of a mobile phone "app" (application), with Apple, purveyors of the iPhone. When a reader pointed out, on the paper's website, that "app" was not short for Apple, and was not invented by Apple, Marsden became more than a little agitated. His Facebook status update that day tells it all: "The general public are fucking idiots. Anyone who leaves smug, supercilious comments on newspaper articles or blogs is a complete fucking imbecile.

"People who hide behind pseudonyms and take lazy, misspelled potshots at people who actually DO stuff rather than sitting around like a bunch of cunts are, well, a bunch of cunts. Get fucked. Right. I feel better now."

COMMUNITIES

"Reports of the cross-dressing turned 34-year-old Alex Reid into the laughing stock of the cage-fighting world. A source said: 'The whole community is in tears about it'." – *Sun*

"London Mayor Boris Johnson yesterday vowed to defend the banking community" – *City A.M.*

"'There was a lot of interest from the hedge fund community,' says John Godden, chief executive of IGS." – *Guardian*

"It is a case closely watched by Canada's journalism community." – *Globe and Mail*

"The campaign to keep the museum in the city is continuing to gain support from the football community." – *Lancashire Evening Post*

"Det Insp Marc Nasser said: 'I would appeal to anyone in the community that has any information about this burglary to come forward and contact police, including those from the criminal community'." – *BBC News*

"After months of speculation among the skiing community, Rossignol has finally announced the re-release of one of their most popular ski bindings of all time." – *The Ski Channel*

"Deputy Chief Constable Howard Roberts said 'Anybody from the football hooligan community that actually thinks that this is an opportunity would be sadly mistaken'." – *BBC News*

HACKWATCH

HOMOIR-PHOBIA

TWITTERERS outraged by Jan Moir's record-breakingly offensive article about how "the ooze of a very different and dangerous lifestyle has seeped out for all to see" in the wake of Stephen Gately's death celebrated two victories on the day of its publication. They succeeded in persuading Marks and Spencer to pull its banner advertising from Moir's page on the *Mail*'s website; and in getting the coroner-contradicting headline "Why There Was Nothing 'Natural' About Stephen Gateley's Death" amended to the marginally less homophobic "A Strange, Lonely and Troubling Death."

In fact this was merely a reversion to the headline that accompanied Moir's column in the paper itself. It is standard practice for the *Mail*'s website, under the editorship of the thuggish Martin Clarke, to pump up and re-purpose the content of Paul Dacre's already boorish newspaper for an online audience consisting largely of expats eager to read how the old country has gone down the pan in their absence.

Even cute animal pictures do not escape the treatment. The visit of a multi-hued Prevost squirrel, native to Thailand, to a back garden in Leeds in January 2008 was headlined in the paper: "What's Black, White, Red and Lost?" The website went for something more chromatically challenged but unmistakeable in its intent: "After the invasion of the grey squirrel, here's their brown Asian cousin."

IN BOTH the "statement" hastily released by Brown Lloyd James on the afternoon of the furore – possibly the only occasion when a newspaper group with a number of national and regional titles and websites at its disposal has instructed one of its columnists to write for its PR agency instead – and her self-justifying piece in the *Mail* a week later, Moir insisted that "I am on the record as supporting same-sex marriages."

That record in full: the only time Moir has directly addressed the topic was in a column for the *Telegraph* in December 2006. "While the popularity of gay weddings has surprised everyone, is it too soon to point out that I can't wait for the first of the high-profile gay divorces to start happening? Surely some of them will turn out to be the kind of fabulous ding-dongs that make a wet Monday morning, a hot cup of tea and a trashy tabloid worth living for… Roll on round one." With friends like these…

But the *Mail* does at least practise equal opportunities in its statistical misrepresentation. The day before Moir suggested that the unrelated deaths of Stephen Gately and Matt Lucas's former husband Kevin McGee "raise troubling questions" about each and every civil partnership, the paper carried the front-page teaser headline "Why do so many marriages end in murder trials?"

"IT'S payback time!" announced a gleeful Jon Holmes on his BBC 6Music show the day after Moir's column appeared.

Holmes's boss, Lesley Douglas, fell victim to the *Mail*'s long-running campaign over the Jonathan Ross/Russell Brand phone calls when she was forced to resign from the corporation a year ago, and it would appear he is not the only one at the corporation with a long memory. As well as copious news coverage, Moir's column was the lead topic of Stephen Nolan's show on Radio Five Live on the evening it was published, Holmes's show the following day, Radio 4's *PM*, the Radio Ulster phone-in and Richard Bacon's Five Live show on the following Monday, Jeremy Vine's Radio 2 show and the Radio Wales phone-in on Tuesday, and Radio 4's *Media Show* on Wednesday. Even BBC America has broadcast a report on the affair.

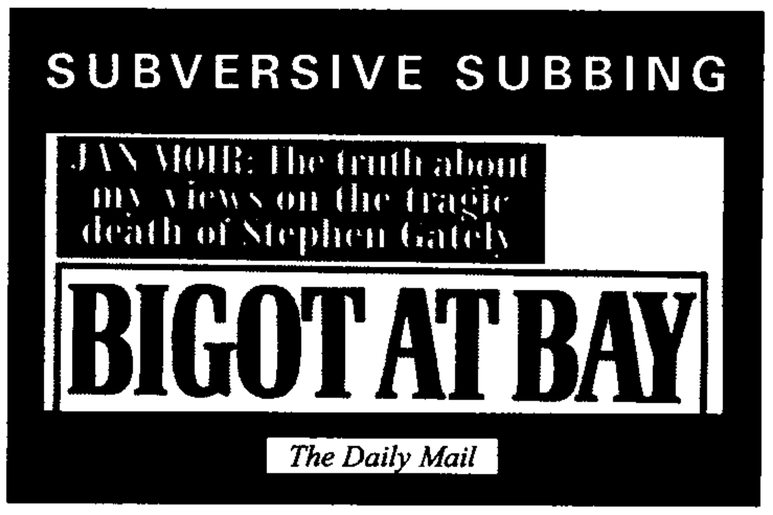
NUMBER CRUNCHING

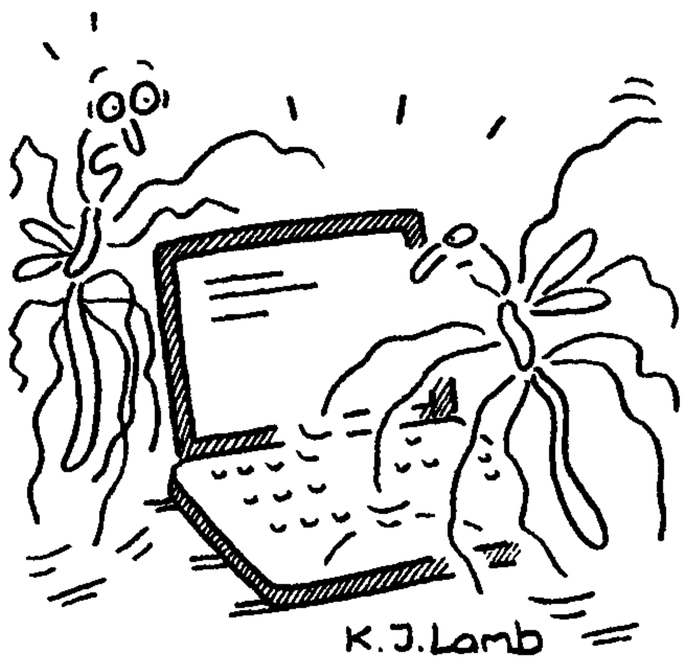
21 Thousand complaints received by Press Complaints Commission in three days about Daily Mail article on death of Stephen Gately

21 Percentage rise in traffic to Daily Mail website in one day from people wishing to read article on death of Stephen Gately

WHILE Stephen Fry was not the instigator of the Twitter campaign against Moir, he did wade in to let his 880,000 followers know that "I gather a repulsive nobody writing in a paper no one of any decency would be seen dead with has written something loathesome [*sic*] and inhumane."

Let this be a lesson for all repulsive nobodies everywhere: only the very famous are qualified to give their opinions on MPs' expenses, Poland's war record etc…





"For God's sake – you only live for 24 hours, and you've spent 23 of those writing a blog about it!"

Commander Maxine de Brunner

In *Eye* 1152 of 17 February to 2 March 2006 we published a story entitled "Untouchables out of reach" about the "fit up" of a serving police officer by members of Scotland Yard's anti-corruption squad who had been undertaking surveillance on the officer in question. Although it was never our intention to do so, it has been suggested that the article could have been read as meaning that there was reason to suspect that Detective Chief Superintendent (now Commander) Maxine de Brunner, who had authorised the surveillance, was herself, involved in the fabrication of evidence against the police officer. We wish to make it clear that this was not the case and regret any distress and embarrassment caused to Ms de Brunner by our article.

THE PAUL FOOT AWARD 2009

THE JUDGES for the Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism 2009 have drawn up the following shortlist (in alphabetical order):

Jonathan Calvert and Clare Newell *(Sunday Times)*

Ian Cobain (*The Guardian)*

Ben Leapman (*Sunday and Daily Telegraph*)

Paul Lewis (*The Guardian)*

Rob Waugh (*Yorkshire Post)*

Stephen Wright and Richard Pendlebury (*Daily Mail)*

The award was set up by *Private Eye* and the *Guardian* in memory of Paul Foot, the campaigning journalist who died in 2004. The £5,000 first prize will be presented on Monday 2 November in London, with each of the runners-up receiving £1,000. Chairman of the judges Brian MacArthur gave the following citations:

● **Jonathan Calvert and Clare Newell, *Sunday Times***

Calvert and Newell of the *Sunday Times* Insight team exposed a number of financial and legislative abuses in the Lords which had previously escaped scrutiny in a body which retains its antiquated gentlemen's club ethos. The stories have already had serious ramifications and point to an urgent need for a reformed second chamber. Their revelations in January 2009 that peers were prepared to help lobbyists amend legislation in return for cash resulted in two peers being suspended for the first time since the 17th century. They also highlighted the widespread practice of peers clocking in to the chamber for a minute just so they can collect allowances. They also produced a series of articles which alleged that individual peers were defrauding the taxpayer by claiming allowances they should not have been entitled to, which have led to fraud investigations.

● **Ian Cobain, *The Guardian***

Ian Cobain, writing in the *Guardian* and on Guardian Unlimited, has covered a long-running investigation into Britain's involvement in the torture of terror suspects detained overseas. Cobain reported on the allegations of British complicity being made by a handful of detainees or their lawyers and was able to locate and highlight the evidence that supports some of these allegations. He reported on the existence of a secret government-sanctioned interrogation policy that underpinned what MI5 has been doing – a policy that led to suspects being tortured. Last March, Gordon Brown told the Commons the policy was to be rewritten and made public. In June 2009 he disclosed that Tony Blair had been aware of this policy.

● **Ben Leapman, *Sunday and Daily Telegraph***

Ben Leapman's investigation into MPs' expenses began in 2004, and culminated in a series of articles published in the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Daily Telegraph* in May 2009. The story exposed MPs' exploitation of parliamentary allowances to subsidise their lifestyles and multiple homes, and forced the disclosure of expenses details for every MP. Leapman's original request was made in January 2005, when the Freedom of Information Act came into force. After repeated refusals and appeals, his case, and that of two other journalists – Jonathan Ungoed-Thomas and Heather Brooke – was finally carried to the high court in May 2008, which ruled in favour of a full disclosure.

● **Paul Lewis, *The Guardian***

Paul Lewis's investigation into the death of Ian Tomlinson at the G20 protests in the spring established that a police officer had struck Tomlinson with a baton and pushed him to the ground moments before he died near the Bank of England on 1 April. A key component of the story was a video filmed by a New York hedge fund manager on his digital camera, published online on Tuesday 7 April and in print the following day, showing the incident in full. Lewis's investigation relied in equal measure, however, on a reconstruction of Tomlinson's last 30 minutes alive, drawn from oral, photographic and video evidence obtained from dozens of other witnesses he had tracked down through "crowd-sourcing". Their testimony was included in a dossier contradicting the police's version of events which the *Guardian* submitted to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). The commission immediately launched a criminal investigation. When a postmortem revealed Mr Tomlinson had died of internal bleeding rather than a heart attack, the TSG officer was questioned on suspicion of manslaughter. The CPS is considering whether to bring charges.

● **Rob Waugh, *Yorkshire Post***

Waugh's exposure of cavalier spending at *Leeds Metropolitan University* involved examination of thousands of staff credit card statements and a wider investigation into the management culture surrounding the university. His exposure discrediting *the takeover of Sheffield Wednesday football club* uncovered links with a money launderer convicted through an FBI sting, a history of debts and a series of highly questionable links with businesses in Europe. Waugh's long-running *investigation into Leeds City Credit Union,* the country's biggest, revealed wholesale mismanagement, complete with a chief executive attempting to run the institution as her own personal business. The stories triggered the unraveling of the credit union's chronic mismanagement which promoted the sacking of chief executive Sue Davenport and subsequently revealed huge under-reporting of bad debts requiring an emergency £4m bailout from public funds. West Yorkshire Police fraud squad are now conducting an inquiry.

● **Stephen Wright and Richard Pendlebury, *Daily Mail***

Shahrokh Mireskandari was one of the most high profile, outspoken and expensive lawyers in London, whose clients included foreign royalty and some of the richest men in the world. But he came to wider attention representing Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur in that officer's litigation against the Metropolitan Police, promising publicly to bring down the upper echelon of the force, then led by Sir Ian Blair. Investigation, using dozens of sources, into Mireskandari's background on both sides of the Atlantic revealed his criminal past and the bogus nature of his qualifications and claims of experience. It also showed his close and mutually beneficial cultivation of Met Police Commander Ali Dizaei and Keith Vaz MP, chairman of the Commons home affairs select committee. Since the articles appeared Mireskandari and his senior partner have been suspended by the Law Society and the offices of Mireskandari's West End firm Dean and Dean have been raided by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and closed. He faces a disciplinary tribunal hearing later this year.

Highly commended in the longlist were:

Susie Boniface, *Sunday Mirror* – Nuclear test veterans campaign

Martin Hickman, *Independent* – Quest for palm oil for British consumers, devastating the rainforest.

Dan McDougall, *News of the World/Observer* – Exploitation of child workers for British high street retailers.

Melanie Newman, *Times Higher Education Supplement* – £36m corruption at London Metropolitan University.

David Rose, *Vanity Fair and Mail on Sunday* – Campaign for former Guantanamo prisoner Binyam Mohamed

"IT IS right that all taxpayers pay their fair share of tax," declared Treasury minister Stephen Timms last week as he announced measures to outlaw various new recovery-threatening tax-dodging ruses.

"However, there are a minority who continue to seek ways to avoid paying their share. This is unacceptable. It is unfair on the majority of taxpayers, undermines fiscal sustainability, and reduces funding for public services. This government will not tolerate tax avoidance or tax evasion in any form, and will act promptly to tackle both of these."

Except, *Eye* readers will recall, when the "unacceptable" tax avoider is a director of, ahem, the Treasury. Despite the crackdown, Audit Commission chairman Michael O'Higgins, who channeled millions in bonuses from his previous job through Jersey trusts to avoid paying his fair share, mysteriously retains a seat on the Treasury board: as chair of the audit committee monitoring how public funds depleted by his tax avoidance are spent!

MORE tax haven fantasy from the PM, meanwhile, this time on the much-hyped deal with Liechtenstein. Addressing City suits at Bloomberg this month, Gordon boasted: "I've already released £1bn from Liechtenstein back to the British exchequer."

The actual figure is in fact nearer to £0, as the "facility" to come clean to the taxman on Liechtenstein accounts has only just opened and the cheques haven't started rolling, or more likely dribbling, in. Brown's claim was based on a hopeful statement from HM Revenue and Customs boss Dave Hartnett that Brits could have £2bn to £3bn stashed in the principality. "And we expect to recoup around £1bn back into UK coffers over time."

As anyone coming clean is likely just to admit tax dodging on the income from their stash, not the deposit itself, and those who don't come clean face no greater threat than having their accounts closed, the £1bn figure is highly optimistic. It will be a very long time before £1bn or anything like it is "released" from the Alpine tax haven.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"IT IS vital that the new Afghan government has legitimacy in the eyes of its people. I have consistently said that the election must be allowed to run its course and that all concerned should respect the process... Our strategy depends on a strong Afghan government showing the leadership required to gain the trust of its people. This election is the opportunity for them to choose that leadership." – *Gordon "never elected as Prime Minister" Brown, 20 October.*

NUMBER CRUNCHING

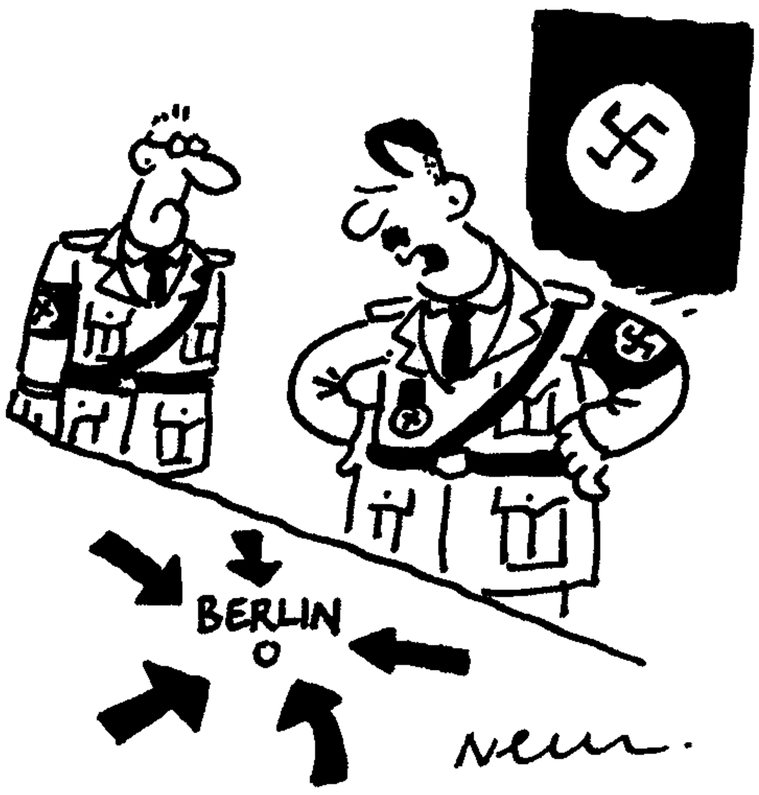
£12,000 Salary of someone over 22 on minimum wage

£12,000 Amount Prime Minister has been forced to pay back on his parliamentary expenses

NUMBER CRUNCHING

22 Percentage of voters polled who said they might vote for BNP after Question Time appearance

24 Percentage of voters polled in 2005 who said they might vote for BNP in London – the city Nick Griffin insists was too "ethnically cleansed" to provide a fair Question Time audience



"It's really unfair the way everyone's ganged up on me"

THANK goodness those cuddly fellows from big business are on hand to fund the fight against obesity and save our nation's fatties from themselves.

On 3 November the Department of Health is holding a joint conference with the Association for the Study of Obesity on the important question of how social inequality relates to obesity: why do poor people have poor diets, and what can be done to stop the rise of obesity?

Top NHS officials and academics will wrestle with the problem, thanks to sponsorship from… Coca-Cola Great Britain and Kellogg's. Yes, the manufacturers of Coke, Walkers Crisps and Coco Pops are paying for the conference and get their name on the publicity.

They will be particularly interested in the presence of government officials working on "social marketing", as the firms hope that if they agree to put health messages in their advertising they will be allowed to avoid difficult "health warning" labels on their products.

LIKE their colleagues in the Commons, most Lords have not been afraid to make the most of their generous expenses allowances. Among the claimants, unsurprisingly, is one peer who has been particularly outspoken on expenses.

Former New Labour minister Lord (George) Foulkes recently put in a series of parliamentary questions and freedom of information requests demanding details of army chief-turned-Tory adviser Sir Richard Dannatt's exes, after the general criticised the government's record on equipping troops in Afghanistan. Sadly for Foulkes, the answers revealed nothing more untoward on Dannatt's part than serving Tesco oxtail soup at a dinner for top brass.

Foulkes, by contrast, claimed £7,626 for his 94 days' attendance in 2007-08: the maximum £81 per day (on top of his £21,014, or £223 a night, overnight subsistence allowance). In his defence, it does appear that he enjoys a decent lunch.

CALLED TO ORDURE

WITH the opinion polls dire, Labour grandees are escaping from the embassy roof via helicopter – or as good as.

The diplomatic analogy is apposite for Lady (Valerie) Amos, arch Blairite and former Foreign Office minister. She has just become British high commissioner in Australia at the express insistence of Downing Street. Treble tinnies all round.

Amos was summoned to the Commons foreign affairs select committee for a pre-appointment hearing. This was part of a move by MPs to establish American-style confirmation hearings for big public-sector jobs. Not that the government is taking much notice: schools secretary Ed Balls blithely ignored the views of the schools select committee when it disagreed with his choice of a new children's commissioner.

Amos turned up for her grilling, but the committee's verdict on her was hardly going to stand in her way. She admitted she was flying off to Canberra that very evening, less than five hours after being quizzed about her suitability for the role. Two fingers to you lot!

She is not the first political appointee in this post. Her immediate predecessor was former Labour MP Helen Liddell, aka "Stalin's Granny", who had almost zero experience of foreign affairs when dispatched Down Under by Tony Blair in 2005. Blair also, in 1997, bizarrely gave the job to a Tory MP, Alastair Goodlad, mainly because he had been his Commons "pair" and was a reliable pal. Blair originally hoped to send Europhile Goodlad to Brussels, but the Tories wouldn't wear it.

From 1989-94 Amos was head of the Equal Opportunities Commission, a body that campaigned for public jobs to be subject to transparent interview procedures. So were such interviews held before she was given the Australia posting? Was she measured against other candidates for this juicy diplomatic role? Er, no.

Amos admitted that the offer had "come wholly out of the blue" and had been put to her by the prime minister's private secretary in April. "I said, 'Australia, that sounds really interesting'," Amos told MPs. "It sounded like a challenge for me." Deal done! Sold to the woman with the Grace Jones haircut.

"Was there any formal selection process?" asked Sir John Stanley (Con, Tonbridge). Amos: "No." Stanley: "There seems a strange preponderance for sending non-career diplomats to Australia." Amos said this was because there were "very strong political links" between London and Canberra. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is known to be a friend of Gordon Brown.

Gisela Stuart (Lab, Edgbaston) pointed out that it was "not within the realms of impossibility that there may soon be a change of government in this country". Amos, seeing a trap, hurriedly said that the "very strong political links" she had mentioned were not party-political. Good heavens, no. "I don't think I am seen as partisan," she claimed. This may come as a surprise to senior Tory peers who, during her spell as Leader of the House of Lords, found her a less than congenial party hack who did what Downing Street told her. Indeed, she is such a dry, dour creature that one dreads to think what the fun-loving Aussies will make of her.

Amos boasted that she had all sorts of experience that equipped her for the job and that when she had attended a "Foreign Office corporate leadership programme" she had found parts of it merely went over ground she already knew. She accepted that "institutionally the Foreign Office does not like political appointments" but said that she had "political antennae" that would be useful "to feed back some of the nuances" to London. As she said "political antennae" she rubbed together the fingertips of her right hand, like a cook breaking an Oxo cube.

Malcolm Moss (Con, NE Cambs) noted that the First Division Association of civil servants publicly deplored political appointments to the diplomatic service, speaking of "cronyism". Amos said that she had detected "a lot of warmth" at her appointment. But Ken Purchase (Lab, Wolverhampton NE) was not satisfied. Was it not "really pretty straightforward" that, if the Tories won power, Amos should immediately resign? "Would it not be hypocritical of you to stay in post?" asked Purchase. Amos said that she would not be representing any particular political party. Purchase firmly told her that she was being "a vicar of Bray".

Mind you, she may not get the chance to serve long under any Cameron government. One oddity of her appointment is that it is, most unusually, being made initially only for a year. Amos said she had asked why this was the case but had not been given a straight answer. The reason is surely clear. The Foreign Office, hating this politicisation of a top diplomatic post, fully hopes the Tories win the election and swiftly give high commissioner Amos the old tin tack.

'Gavel Basher'

"PURER than pure? Dirty tricks are all in a day's work for spin doctors." The headline on George Pascoe-Watson's article for the *Sun* in 2002 made it pretty clear where the political hack stood on the dark arts of PR and the then government, which he declared "rotten to the core".

Pascoe-Watson took particular objection to the workings of "Labour's famed rapid rebuttal unit – which quickly became a byword for a dirty tricks department" and attacked Tony Blair, "who encouraged his followers to silence any critic who got in his way".

Seven years on, the *Sun*'s political editor has announced that he is leaving journalism to become a partner at Portland, the PR firm set up by Tim Allan. In a previous life, Allan was Blair's deputy press secretary, playing Luke Skywalker to Alastair Campbell's Darth Vader. It was he who tried to distract attention from the story of Robin Cook and Gaynor Regan by planting on the BBC a bogus allegation that Chris Patten faced prosecution under the official secrets act. He has been involved in many more of the "dirty tricks" that Pascoe-Watson found so repugnant, even since leaving No 10 to make his fortune in corporate PR. No doubt this will be the first topic of discussion when the pair begin working together.

"I'm afraid I'm not good at goodbyes"

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE European Commission is keen to give the impression that the Lisbon treaty is a done deal and everything is proceeding smoothly. But it ain't quite as simple as that.

It has become clear that the second Irish referendum on the treaty set a precedent by allowing countries, in exchange for ratification, to obtain bespoke guarantees, which will be legalised at a future date. This is what Klaus's opposition has boiled down to: the Czech Republic wants a guarantee that Germans cannot use the treaty to make restitution claims related to expulsions at the end of the Second World War.

If Klaus gets his way, other countries may do the same – Slovakia also wants to protect itself from Second World War claims. But a potentially far more serious problem awaits the commission in Germany, the EU's largest country.

As reported in *Eye* 1241, Germany's constitutional court said in June that the EU was not properly democratic, the Lisbon treaty did nothing to correct the "structural democratic deficit" and therefore the EU could not automatically have the final word over the rights of its citizens. These elements have now been incorporated into German law. Germany's highest court can, in principle, overturn judgments of the European court of justice (ECJ) if it finds that the rights of German citizens have been violated.

Germany starting to say no if it does not like a Brussels edict could open the door to other countries picking and choosing EU laws. This is certainly not what Brussels intended when the Lisbon treaty was drafted – it was supposed to consolidate the EU's power, not give an à la carte menu to member states! A test case relating to employment law is now working its way through the system in Germany, with pronouncement due by the end of the year. David Cameron, and others looking for Lisbon wriggle-room, should watch closely.

EUROPEANS rolling their sleeves up for swine flu vaccinations will generate billions of pounds in profits for British drugs giant GlaxoSmithKline. However, the British company's earnings from the great blockbuster Pandemrix will not yield much for the British exchequer.

The drug is owned by a company called GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, based in Rixensart, 10km south of Brussels, where the company runs its vaccine research programme. Why the Belgian suburbs? Because income from patents is taxed at a maximum of 6.8 percent (only 20 percent of the income is taxed, at 34 percent), with several other allowances reducing the real rate even further under tax rules sanctioned by the European Commission three years ago.

Such a generous tax regime only exists because of the triumph within the EU of "tax competition", yet another neo-liberal economic policy that seemed like a good idea during the boom years but is less appealing now to fiscally strapped finance ministers.

Under tax competition, heavily lobbied governments try to out-cut each other to attract business, and corporate tax rates race to the bottom as a result.

It might not have been so. The French and Germans long favoured "tax harmonisation", which would have prevented competition-eroding company tax rates. But they were defeated by – who else? – Gordon Brown, who boasted to the CBI in 2003: "The debate on tax has moved from harmonising internal rates to tax competition – being competitive in a global economy."

Now his government is deprived of billions while multinational giants save hundreds of millions of pounds. Not to be sneezed at!

EU-phemisms

He sidelined the national elected parliament and pushed through what he wanted

LEGAL NEWS

ANOTHER rebuff for Mr Justice Eady, this time for his refereeing of the British Chiropractic Association's battle to punish science writer Simon Singh (see *Eyes passim*).

Lord Justice Laws ruled that Singh could go to the appeal court to question Eady's interpretation of the facts of the case. As the *Eye* has reported, Eady had alarmed scientists in Britain and beyond by allowing the chiropractors to sue Singh for criticising in the *Guardian* their extravagant claims for their "alternative" therapy. Eady ruled that because Singh had said that chiropractors knowingly promoted "bogus" treatments, he had to prove that they were conmen, rather than simply eccentrics.

Lord Justice Laws was contemptuous. He said Eady's judgment was "legally erroneous" and Singh had every right to go to the appeal court and say his remarks were fair comments based on the evidence. Time to break open the champagne? Not yet. Even if Singh beats off the chiropractors he will still have to find tens of thousands of pounds. In English libel law, defendants lose even when they win.

The pressure group Sense About Science, meanwhile, reports that the "Google alert" feature that searches the web looking for any mention of an individual or company is now being used by libel lawyers hunting for trade.

ME sufferers were stunned recently to receive threatening letters when they posted their views on the "Lightning Process", a programme that allegedly produces "amazing results" for people not only with ME but "anxiety, panic attack, over-eating, low self-esteem and guilt" too. When sufferers started reporting they had paid £600 for a course that did not work for them, they received warning of defamation proceedings if they did not recant.

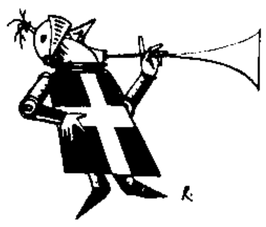
As the *Eye* has reported, the *International Journal of Speech Language and the Law* got into trouble for a review that concluded there was no scientific evidence to show that lie detectors work (it was threatened with legal action by Israeli company Nemesysco, and removed its findings from the web). And Dr Peter Wilmshurst faces a libel action here from the North American health giant NMT for questioning its new procedure for closing holes in the heart.

Not many scientists or health journalists are as brave as Singh and Wilmshurst. Nick Miller, a science correspondent on the *Melbourne Age*, has described how, after he had interviewed Singh about homeopathy, the *Age*'s lawyers "diligently removed some significant directly and indirectly quoted comments about homeopathy from the story".

He thought about publishing the uncensored version on his blog but couldn't take the risk of libel action in Australia (which has our libel laws) or a libel tourist case in London. "Being sued for a story is a gut-sinking, career and family-financial-security-threatening process, and it would be foolhardy and not at all sensible to risk it," he said, adding: "I am left with the nagging feeling I've short-changed my readers." In the short-changing of readers, and the assault on scientific writing and journalism, big pharma and alternative medicine for once seem strangely united.

'Ratbiter'

EYE TOLD YOU SO (3)



FOLLOWING an earlier Squarebasher story (*Eye* 1246), the *Sunday Times* last weekend "revealed" that: "The Royal Navy has agreed to sacrifice one of its two new aircraft carriers to save about £8.2bn from the defence budget." But Squarebasher's source still maintains that construction on *both* ships is likely to be suspended.

The ships are built around the delayed F35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft: flight decks, hangars, lifts and other systems have been designed to fit this particular aircraft. Indeed, the Ministry of Defence ordered three test aircraft back in March to help evaluate the F35/UK Carrier combination before the equally delayed carriers had even left the drawing board.

Design and development of the F35 has already cost the UK £2bn, and there is a further £8bn earmarked to buy the final production models, those for the Royal Navy being the F35B, which, rather like the Harrier, is capable of vertical takeoff and landing. Lockheed Martin, the aircraft's manufacturer, says the UK has signed up to buy 140 of them at a withering cost of $120m (£73.5m) each.

The super-carriers are designed to carry 36 JSF aircraft each, which means the rest of the fighters are presumably destined for the RAF, already saddled with a huge order for the Eurofighter costing, back in 2003, £20bn. The MoD has refused to release updated cost estimates on the grounds of "commercial sensitivity", but it is unlikely the RAF will be able to afford, let alone require the left over F35s from the Royal Navy order.

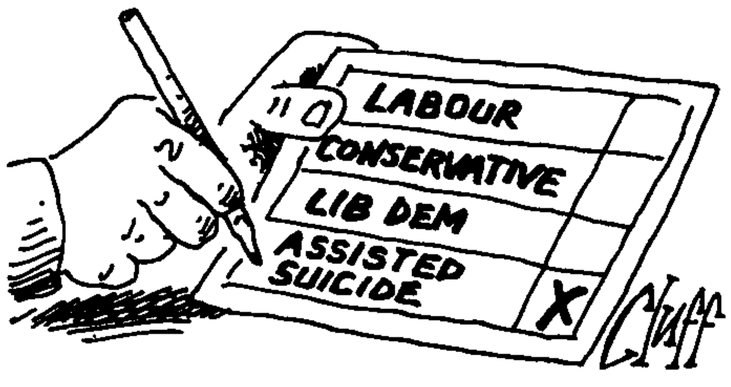
As well as strike aircraft that the Treasury cannot afford, the carriers would require crucial squadrons of maritime airborne surveillance and control aircraft which have yet to be designed.

Also, the Royal Navy doesn't have the crews for the aircraft or indeed to man the carriers; between them, they would require 3,000 personnel to sail. The total number of Royal Navy personnel serving on board all its ships at sea on 9 January 2007 was 3,486.

The reluctance of the government to accept publicly that the carriers are doomed because of financial "over-stretch" is based on one simple fact: they are to be built in shipyards that happen to be in Labour constituencies, the final assembly to be completed in Rosyth, where at least 1,000 jobs could go if they are suspended.

Rosyth is, of course, next door to Dunfermline East, Gordon Brown's seat. Better, in the short term, to carry on wasting money than risk losing votes to the SNP.

'Squarebasher'



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

MULTI-CULTI NEWS

DESPITE allegations of vote-rigging by Labour party activists in Tower Hamlets (*Eye* 1246) – and more to come – there is at least one man in the local party who takes a relaxed attitude to getting the vote out. Take a bow, Lutfur Rahman, leader of the council.

In the fortnight before the European elections on 4 June, which marked Labour's worst electoral performance since the First World War, Cllr Rahman was hard on the campaign trail in, er, Saudi Arabia, with three other councillors under the auspices of the Islamic Forum of Europe. The trip included a visit to the Imam of the Kaaba in Mecca, Sheikh Abdur Rahman al-Sudais, who, *Panorama* reported in 2005, is on record as having said that Jews are "monkeys and pigs", "rats of the world" and the "offspring of apes and pigs"; that Christians are "cross worshippers" and Hindus "idol worshippers". Very multicultural.

Cllr Rahman returned just in time to sack the council's chief executive, Martin Smith, who had expressed concern about increasing Mosque influence on the council, the day before the 4 June elections (*Eyes passim*). All this excitement clearly left Lutfur cream-crackered, because on election day, according to polling station records, he did not actually bother to vote.

● OTHERS in Tower Hamlets, it seems, are *very* keen on voting indeed.

During the Shadwell by-election in 2007, a very tall person wearing a full burka arrived to vote at the Bigland Street polling station. She stood out not only because of her height, but also because she was wearing bright red trainers. About an hour later another very tall person in a full burka, wearing bright red trainers, arrived to vote. Another hour, another tall person in burka and trainers, and so on

On the fourth occasion that such a strange figure appeared, a Tory poll worker demanded that the presiding officer challenge the modestly dressed elector. Alas, the voter's identity was never established, for "she" hitched up her burka and put those trainers to good use, vanishing down the street before you could say "Vote Karzai!"

BARNSLEY CHOP

AMID all the fuss about BNP leader Nick Griffin's appearance on *Question Time* last week, one interesting snippet of political news went unreported outside Yorkshire.

The BNP had been tipped to win a by-election in Barnsley's St Helen's ward, occasioned by the death earlier this year of Labour councillor David Bostwick. If Labour lost, it would also forfeit overall control of the council, which it has held since the 1930s, to a group of Independents. In fact Labour romped home, with candidate Roy Butterwood gaining 1,520 votes against the BNP runner-up's 590. The Labour vote rose by 555 over last year's total of 965 and the BNP's was down 45 from last year's 635.

There are a number of lessons here which should give some heart to decent people. One: despite disillusion with Labour, working class voters are not ready to get into goose-step behind Griffin and his thugs. Two: the BNP's appeal seems to be limited to a hard core of the stupid and the naive. Three: it is possible to beat the fascists with a good candidate and an energetic campaign.

However, only 31 percent of those eligible to vote actually turned out. So two cheers for democracy, anyway.

"The streets in this area are all named after local councillors..."

BYE, NYE

NEATH Port Talbot (NPT) council has put a new twist on the techniques of "persuading" council tenants, at great expense, that they would be better off if their homes were taken under private control.

The Labour council is spending £5m of taxpayers' money on glossy literature, a propaganda roadshow, door-to-door canvassers, consultants, hotel function rooms, buffets and taxis to take tenants to meetings in the hope that they will vote in favour of stock transfer. So far, so familiar.

The opposition to this steamroller, in the form of the Neath Port Talbot Defend Council Housing (DCH) campaign, has so far scraped together the grand sum of £400 to argue for a No vote via individual donations and a second-hand book sale.

Despite this, the council is still making life as difficult as possible for the No campaigners to get their message across.

The DCH campaign asked the council for the addresses of all NPT's 9,300 council homes so that it could deliver leaflets putting across its point of view. The council refused. After the campaigners put in an FoI request it relented – but it then supplied the addresses, for which DCH had to pay, in a completely random order, making it very difficult for DCH to arrange deliveries. When DCH asked for the list to be handed over in street or estate order the council demurred, saying it needed to seek "legal advice". Miserable gits!

FACT: Not one NPT Labour councillor has come out in support of retaining council ownership of the housing stock. Plaid Cymru and Lib Dem councillors have voiced their support, while local Greens and Socialists have been involved in the No campaign. What would Nye Bevan have made of this lot?

HOE, HOE, HOE

PLYMOUTH city council's plan to sell off the profit-making Citybus company (*Eye* 1245) is turning into a shambles before it has properly begun.

Some prospective bidders want the whole process scrapped and started again after confidential commercial information was made public before a decision had even been made on whether the company should be sold. The Tory council had claimed to be merely a majority shareholder but, it turns out, actually owns 100 percent of the company.

Eye 1245 revealed that the frontrunner to buy Citybus was a consortium led by taxi operator John Preece, which includes Taxibank, in which the council's cabinet member for finance, Ian Bowyer, has an interest – an interest he unfortunately forgot to mention until after taking part in discussions to flog off Citybus. No sooner had copies of the *Eye* landed on the Hoe than Bowyer announced that Preece's consortium was out of the running.

This came as a surprise to Preece. He declared that no matter what Bowyer said, his consortium was still very much in the running, and that he would see the council in court unless allowed back in. Bowyer dug himself into an even deeper hole by announcing, before any reliable valuation had been made, that the council had received several bids in excess of £10m for Citybus.

The only people left with smiles on their faces are consultants Deloitte and KPMG, who between them are pocketing £130,000 a month for their, er, expert advice.

● LAST MONTH Tory West Dorset council (WDC) awarded a contract to build new offices and develop the Charles Street area of Dorchester to an outfit called Simons Developments.

Also last month, the developers' parent company, Simons Group, was fined more than £800,000 by the Office of Fair Trading for, er, bid-rigging. Simons' path was eased by WDC obligingly forking out £250,000 of council taxpayers' money to help the company prepare its planning application. Council chief exec David Clarke said he was "disappointed" by the fine levied on Simons for bid-rigging and over-pricing on projects in York, Hull and Newark. How tender-hearted!

EDUCASHUN NEWS

THINGS are going from bad to worse for United Learning Trust (ULT), the academy-sponsoring arm of a Christian educational charity.

Its Sheffield Springs Academy was found to be "inadequate" by Ofsted earlier this year, and then last month the inspectors put its Sheffield Park Academy into special measures. The departure of Sheffield Springs' headteacher David Lewis meant that more than half of ULT's 17 academies had lost their headteachers within two years of the trust taking over.

Then, last week, it emerged from Dorset county council cabinet papers that "concern about the performance of ULT caused [Department for Children Schools and Families] officials to ask we seek a different sponsor" for a school in Portland.

Yet none of this appears to have quashed the enthusiasm of education chiefs in Oxfordshire, who want to hand over a large secondary school to ULT. Oxford School is already doing much better on exam results than the city's two current academies. A factsheet produced by parents campaigning to save the school notes that they won't even get any extra funding out of the deal, because ULT has "already contributed to academies elsewhere. It's buy one, get one free for ULT."

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

AT LAST! A GAME THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY THE PEOPLE: LET'S BRUSH AWAY THE DEAD HAND OF MIDDLE-CLASS RESPECTABILITY...
NO NEED FOR EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT OR MEMBERSHIP OF A SELECT CLUB...
LIBRARY
ALL HAIL STREET CROQUET!
THE GAME'S YOURS IF YOU CAN HIT THAT FRIED CHICKEN CARTON FROM HERE!

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

CLASSICAL music is again asking itself the old question: can the fat fees of star conductors be justified in a recession?

Despite much speculation, no one really knows how much conductors earn because it's in the interests of the artists, agents and orchestral managers to camouflage the figures. But £25,000 per concert for a leading maestro in London is probably not far off the money. This makes him (never her) about twice as expensive as the rest of the orchestra put together. But is he worth it?

Artistically speaking, it's hard to put a value on what the conductor brings to the feast. But one can apply a measurement of sorts at the box office; and as things get tougher (as everyone expects they will next year), it seems conductors may have to do more to exert their pulling power and earn their keep.

Oleg Caetani is a case in point: a middle-ranking maestro who was briefly appointed music director of English National Opera a few years ago – so briefly, in fact, the appointment was terminated before it had even started thanks to the revelation that he wouldn't be in London most of the time because he had another, full-time job running the, er, Melbourne Symphony. Poor Caetani has now lost the Melbourne job, his contract cut short by a tough incoming chairman of the orchestra, as he wasn't filling seats.

As ever, the severance has been presented in smiling terms that refer to "releasing" him to pursue exciting opportunites elsewhere, etc; but no one has the slightest doubt that lack of box-office appeal was at the heart of it.

Melbourne may not be the centre of the cultural universe, but classical music is a small enough world for this incident to have generated shockwaves. Reputations in the arts are nebulous. The time seems to have come when they'll be tested economically by the old-fashioned method of bums on seats.

TALKING of bums on seats, they're getting bigger, according to the Norman Foster architectural practice which designed the new, recently opened Dallas opera house.

Like many things in Texas, the opera house has been built on a grand scale as the hub of a £220m arts complex that sprawls across 19 blocks of the city centre. But the number of seats has been reduced from 3,300 to 2,200. And the reason? Foster says that having researched the matter, it was found that the seats would have to be bigger (and therefore fewer) because the opera-going bottoms that would fill them are broader than they used to be.

Anxious to avoid causing local offence, Fosters didn't specify if the problem was unique to Texans. But it would certainly be interesting to know if the bigger-bottom phenomenon is more pronouced among patrons of the stalls (the corporate rich) than in the gallery (where serious opera fans miss meals to pay for tickets). How long before Covent Garden issues its foyer staff with tape-measures?

ONE conductor who probably hasn't broken in on the big money yet is Sue Perkins, the comedienne who triumphed on the BBC's *Maestro* competition. But her victory has had consequences.

Waving a baton the other Sunday in Soho – and very competently too – she drew a more than decent crowd to a concert by the London Gay Symphony Orchestra (LGSO), even though it was in the open air and raining at the time.

This column can now reveal a terrible secret at the heart of the LGSO: some of its members are not gay. Three at least are closet straights who only joined the orchestra because "it's friendly, fun and doesn't hold auditions". Name and shame them, says O'Boulez, and end this fraud! When people pay good money to hear gay musicians give authentic readings of Tchaikovsky, they should have them. Happy is no substitute!

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

TV

The X Factor (ITV1)
I'll Do Anything (BBC1)
The Graham Norton Show (BBC1)

TELLY has spent a lot of time recently fretting over moral dilemmas. Should Nick Griffin have been allowed on Question Time? Should product placement be allowed in shows? At least, though, both of these issues were debated before the BBC, in one case, and Ofcom, in the other, acquiesced.

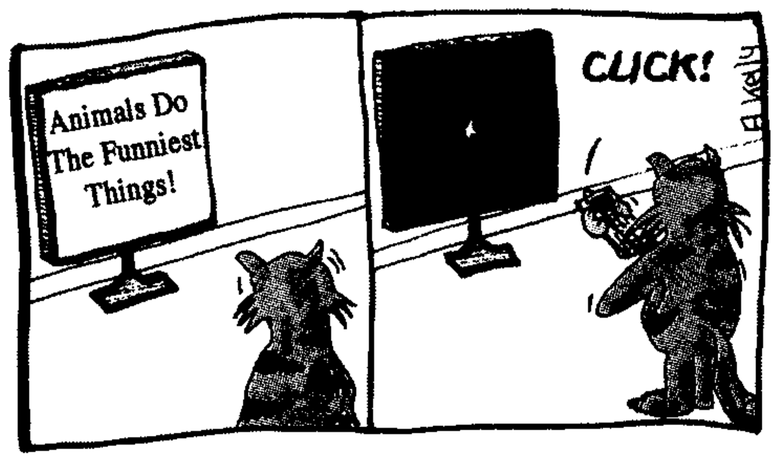
However, a serious ethical problem in TV entertainment is creeping up without anyone apparently noticing or bothering. The problem is the increasing blurring between editorial and advertising in entertainment shows.

Take **The X Factor**. The 18 October edition included long spots (filling in the moments while the votes were counted), excitedly billed by presenter Dermot O'Leary as "two huge *X Factor* exclusives". In these, Whitney Houston performed a single from her new album and Cheryl Cole trilled a track from hers. Before these thrilling segments, O'Leary threw to an ad break in which, far from coincidentally, there were commercials for Houston and Cole's albums, plus one from Alexandra Burke, winner of last year's *X Factor*.

Although we've always known that *The X Factor* is a scouting mission for Simon Cowell to find guaranteed hits for his record companies (which is why the public retaliates by trying to make sure that *Britain's Got Talent* is never won by a musical act), there's something even more uncomfortable about watching an entertainment show in which the content and ad breaks are indistinguishable. We cut from Whitney and Cheryl plugging their new albums to Whitney and Cheryl plugging their new albums.

The Cole case was particularly egregious. Under Ofcom rules, during the show neither presenter Dermot O'Leary nor Cowell would be allowed to wave at the camera a copy of a book they had published: this would be viewed as improper commercial use of a broadcasting position. Admittedly, such presenters just go on someone else's show – Jonathan Ross, Paul O'Grady, Graham Norton – to plug their memoirs, but at least there are some boundaries. (BBC rules are even stricter: Terry Wogan has been rebuked several times for trying to tout his books on air and, in that case, the publishers don't have the sneaky option of buying ads within his show.)

Surely, then, Cheryl Cole, as an *X Factor* judge, with all the new career exposure that this position has brought her, should not be able to break off from her judging duties to flaunt her new recording before the programme's 10M viewers? The commercial advantage she gains from this (potentially worth millions) is surely far more worrying than the risks of product placement in a drama. Even though we accept that entertainment and chat shows depend for their guests on celebrities with movies, books or records to sell, there still needs to be a division between guests and regular panellists.



At the Beeb, which isn't supposed to run adverts, such slippage is even more troubling. Surprisingly little attention was paid to a recent survey of West End audiences which discovered that irregular theatregoers were vastly more likely to buy tickets for a production cast through a tv talent show than for one required to put out paid advertisements and posters in the usual way.

This merely confirmed what most people suspected; but the BBC has rejected at various times complaints from West End theatre producers that series such as *How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria?*, *Any Dream Will Do* and **I'll Do Anything** were giving an unfair commercial advantage to shows produced and theatres owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Mackintosh. Although the BBC Trust was concerned enough to insist that the most recent series involved a musical not written by Lloyd Webber (*Oliver!*), this theatrical survey confirms the worrying truth: these BBC audition formats are providing advertising and box-office sales worth tens of millions of pounds, guaranteeing massive hits regardless of the quality of the productions involved.

Perhaps it was the experience of being involved in those extended theatrical commercials that led Norton to see nothing wrong in one of the most astonishing examples of commercial product-pushing in the history of public-service television.

On the first edition of the otherwise feisty **The Graham Norton Show** (just moved to BBC1 as what is clearly a planned replacement for Wossy's chat-show), Olivia Newton-John was allowed ten minutes to promote a herbal drink she manufactures with her latest husband. Large glasses were poured and savoured by Norton and the guests in an extended sequence which looked less like a chat-show than a shopping channel.

It's too late in the day to be too puritanical about TV: public-service broadcasters can't turn their face against guests' plugging, and ITV needs all the advertising it can get. But there still have to be some limits. Viewers of *The X Factor* should not have to spend too much time working out whether they're watching the show or a commercial break, and the BBC's job isn't to sell West End tickets or health drinks.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

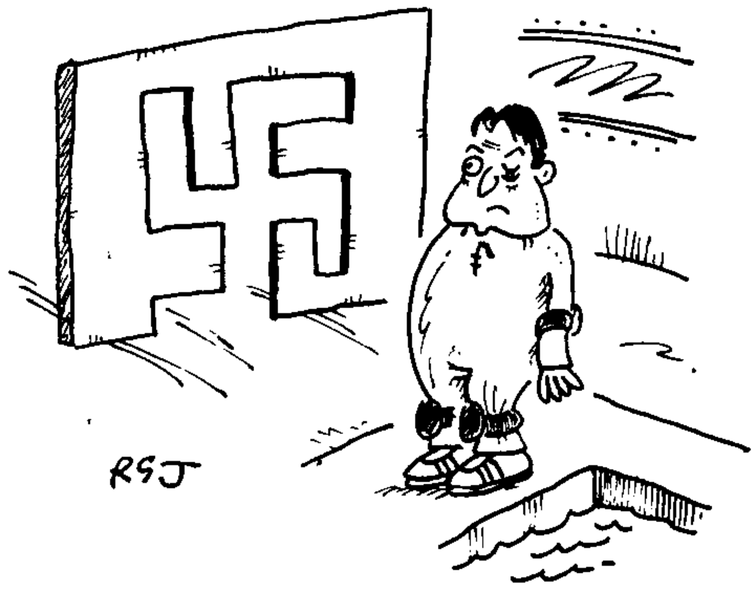
The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: When counting down, what whole number follows 37?
Contestant: Er, 19.

AR: What's the only prime number between 60 and 65?
Contestant: 50.

AR: What's 80 percent of 200?
Contestant: Four.

AR: In English literary relationships, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, who wrote Frankenstein, married the poet Percy who?
Contestant: Thrower.



TV celeb Nick Griffin does Hole In The Wall

MEDIA NEWS

WHO are the "friends" of programming boss Peter Fincham who are behind the discreet campaign to promote him to become chief executive of either Channel 4 or of his current employer ITV, despite his lack of City experience?

Step forward Matthew Freud, the public relations man married to Elisabeth Murdoch. The couple have good reason to think highly of former BBC1 controller Fincham. In recent years, he has given the independent TV production company Shine lucrative commissions to make two prime-time drama series – first *Merlin* on BBC1 and then *Demons* for ITV1. And who owns Shine? Why, Ms Elisabeth Murdoch!

MEMBERS of the National Union of Journalists are preparing a fightback against a Spartist internal faction called "NUJ Left", currently making a nuisance of itself within the union.

NUJ Left focuses on political campaigns; the recent call to boycott Israeli goods being just one of its brilliant ideas. Rather than discussing mundane matters such as pay, conditions and the increasing threat of redundancies, it prefers to concentrate on "how to respond to the British National Party and Afghanistan" at poorly attended meetings.

Channel 4 News presenter Jon Snow has already left the NUJ as a result of this return to "student politics" and it looks as though many more will follow if, as expected, NUJ Left takes control of the union's NEC at the next elections.

THE outsourcing of the BBC's "technology framework contract" to Siemens (*Eyes passim*) continues to drive staff crazy as they toil with phones that don't work and computers that routinely crash.

The latest irritation follows a decision by Siemens to charge staff £10 to reset their passwords in order to use the computer systems. Paul Lewis, presenter of Radio 4's *Money Box*, emailed colleagues to ask: "Are Siemens going to pay us when this ridiculous and inefficient system fails to work?"

The answer, of course, is no. Siemens, on the other hand, has trousered £2bn of BBC (ie taxpayers') money in return for its ten-year contract.

SIX years ago, as part of the fall-out from the government's demented attack on Andrew Gilligan for his comments on Radio 4's *Today* programme and in an article for the *Mail on Sunday*, the then BBC director-general Greg Dyke banned *Today* host John Humphrys and other high-profile corporation colleagues from writing articles on "current affairs and contentious issues" for the press. This was on the grounds that such activities were "incompatible with the BBC's impartiality".

A disgruntled Humphrys was generously compensated for the £100,000 hole the loss of his weekly *Sunday Times* column made in his income. But who is this peeping out of a picture byline in last Thursday's *Times?*

Step forward John Humphrys, "acclaimed host of the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4", at the head of a double-page spread on "the present economic crisis". Close reading, however, reveals that it is simply a transcript of a "financial forum at the London Stock Exchange" which Humphrys chaired on behalf of Europe Arab Bank as part of his lucrative sideline as "conference facilitator". And it was appearing not in the main paper but in a 12-page supplement sponsored by, er, Europe Arab Bank. So no impartiality issues at all then!

Another way to rub shoulders with the great and the good of BBC News would be to shell out £149 plus VAT for a ticket to the *Spectator*'s Editors' Dinner at Royal Hospital Gardens on 18 November, with "a different *Spectator* editor joining you for every course". Among those "*Spectator* editors" who are being advertised as taking part in the black-tie dinner is BBC autocutie Emily Maitlis – despite the fact that, er, the Beeb banned her from being a contributing editor of the *Spectator* on grounds of impartiality two years ago!

"I ADORE Frankie Boyle," enthused Kelvin MacKenzie in the *Sun*, relating the tale of how the comedian had been banned from using the F-word on a BBC panel game.

"This, of course, was a red rag to a bull for Boyle. From that moment on he never used the F-word, he used the C-word instead. Boyle was the major reason I watched *Mock the Week*, but now he has quit, I won't be tuning in as often."

He is, presumably, unrelated to the Kelvin MacKenzie who was apoplectic about a mooted BBC documentary about the derivation of swear words in 2007. "Is this really the kind of stuff we want our hard-earned licence-payers' cash to be spent on?" he thundered in his *Sun* column. "There is no justification for the C-word doco and it damages the PR effort by the BBC when this kind of tosh goes out under their name."

AD NAUSEAM

IF ANY of your magazine subscriptions actually made it to your home during last week's postal strike, you may have seen an exquisitely timed full-page ad for Royal Mail's free business advice pack.

The ad featured a tree growing out of a cartoon character's head, with each branch labelled individually: "Save more time", "Find new customers", "Keep existing customers" and "Save money".

In return, allow us to offer some free advice to Royal Mail: if you really want to help businesses save time, money and keep customers, how about delivering the bloody post?

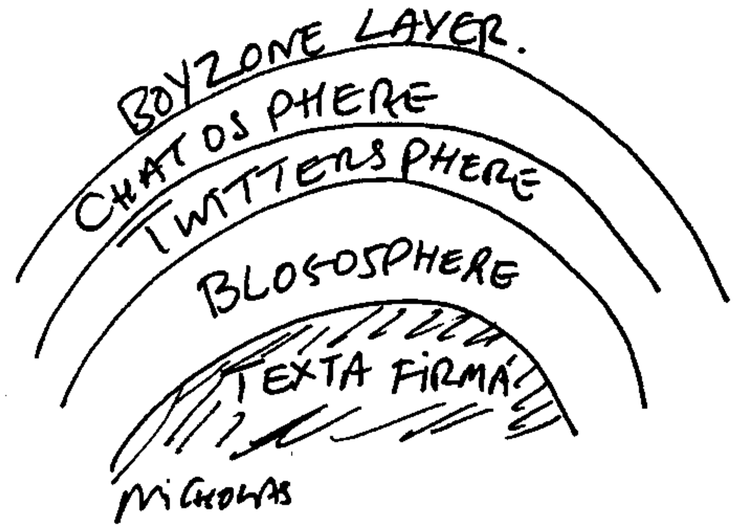
THE postal strike may have brought widespread misery, but every cloud has a silver lining – the Direct Marketing Association has said that the strike led to £10m-worth of cancelled junk mail campaigns.

Elsewhere, ISBA, the body that represents advertisers, warned that the strike would shift future marketing campaigns from post to email – which is also most welcome. If unsolicited marketing must go on, it's easier to banish unwanted spam than it is to seal up your letterbox, and it wastes less paper.

THE London *Evening Standard* trumpeted its change to a freesheet with an ad campaign around the capital. It aimed to show off the paper's high-minded credentials with a phrase borrowed from the Greek writer and philosopher Nikos Kazantzakis: "I fear nothing. I am free."

All very clever… except that this was Kazantzakis's epitaph, written on his tomb. Is the *Standard*'s agency, McCann Erickson, trying to suggest that the paper is heading in a similar direction?

Global Yawning Explained



ECO-GNOMICS

RED faces for Virgin Atlantic and others at last week's Grosvenor House Hotel love-in, aka the annual *PR Week* awards.

The anti-aviation group Plane Stupid (which *wasn't* up for an award) managed to gain access to the event, its members dressed in charity shop black tie gear and gowns, along with some Heathrow residents whose homes face demolition when the airport's third runway is built.

During the champagne reception, the campaigners quietly took their seats at Virgin's £3,000 table. When the Virgin PR department and its guests then arrived for dinner, the conversation went something like this: "Er, we think you've got the wrong table. We're from Virgin. This is our table."

To which the campaigners replied: "Well we're from Plane Stupid, and we've got exactly the right table. In fact we're serving you with a compulsory purchase order for the table – just like the one you and BA and BAA are pushing to be served on the residents of Sipson. We're sure you understand. After all, your table's needed. We need your table and you really have no choice in the matter. That's fair, isn't it?"

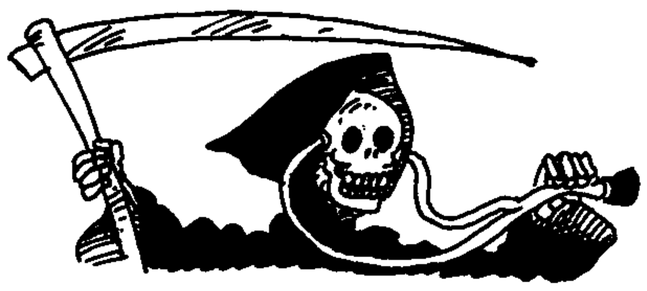
It didn't take long for *PR Week* organisers, sensing a PR disaster at their own event, to call the police. It took 18 of them to remove the peaceful protestors, many of whom were by now sitting quietly on the floor, Virgin's table having been dismantled around them.

One Heathrow resident spotted a friend at the Greenpeace table (the group was shortlisted for an award for best charity PR department) and sat down for a chat. Within seconds the Greenpeace table too was surrounded by security guards and one of the Greenpeace team (who had applauded the Plane Stupid action) was asked to leave. So Greenpeace members all promptly stood up and left.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

CLOGS ARE LIKE SOOO IN !!!
NOT ONLY ARE THEY STYLISH, CHARMING, AND CULTURALLY EXCITING.....
Style editor
...BUT THEY STOP THE LIGHTER MODELS FROM BLOWING AWAY.



MEDICINE BALLS

In detention

IN MAY 2009 the Children's Commissioner for England, Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green, published a report: "The arrest and detention of children subject to immigration control."

The report followed an inspection of the Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) by the commissioner and his team, and uncovered clear breaches of safe practice and management by doctors and nurses working at the IRC. So why did the inspection team not report them to their regulatory authorities?

Health care at Yarl's Wood is provided by Serco Health ("We improve patient care with our health services"), but the report concluded that the standards failed to meet those of the NHS. No efforts seem to have been made to retrieve existing medical records; vaccinations were missed or given incorrectly; serious diseases, including sickle cell anaemia and insulin-dependent diabetes, were inadequately treated; and children were poorly prepared for the health risks they would face on deportation.

Professor Aynsley-Green observed that nearly 2,000 children were locked up in the UK each year solely for administrative reasons, and that the length of time they were being held was increasing. He called for an end to the detention of children before deportation, but he didn't call on the General Medical Council or Nursing and Midwifery Council to investigate basic clinical errors or substandard care.

Serco Health employs nurses, but GPs are brought in on a sessional locum basis. This makes complex care much harder and, given that the UK government is already flouting Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ("the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child… shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time"), then scrutinising a few locums may seem like small beer. But one of the duties of a doctor is supposed to be referring poor care for further investigation.

It may be that the conditions in Yarl's Wood are so appalling that normally competent doctors are unable to practise a decent standard of care. Or it may be that the care is avoidably poor. On reading the report, one senior GP has now made a detailed 11-page referral of three of his colleagues to the GMC, but whether it takes up the challenge remains to be seen.

Size does matter

LAST week every GP practice got its allocation of swine flu jabs. Single-handed GPs with just a thousand or so patients got 500 shots, whereas the larger practices, with 20,000 patients or more, got, er, 500 shots.

This triumph of central planning was pointed out to the Department of Health but could not apparently be altered, with practices advised to go through the tortuous process of re-ordering if they run out. The DoH made the same error when handing out swab kits at the beginning of the outbreak, and practices that ran out were unable to make a definitive diagnosis. Not that it mattered, as we switched to diagnosis by dodgy algorithm to offload out-of-date Tamiflu on anyone feeling slightly woozy.

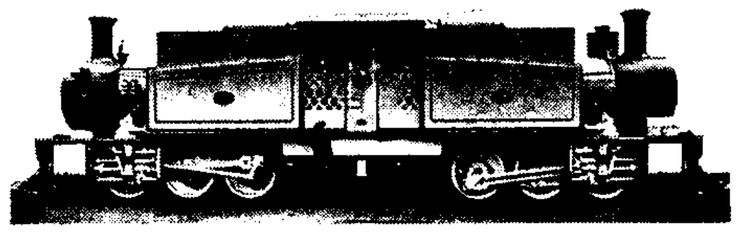
Corpsing

"EFFORTS to resuscitate the corpse of practice-based commissioning have had little effect." So said David Colin-Thome, the primary care tsar, at the Wellards annual conference earlier this month.

This lead the *Health Service Journal*, not unreasonably, to announce that PBC was dead, which didn't go down well with Colin-Thome's "new" Labour masters, or the Tories, who plan to make PBC compulsory and therefore give GPs the responsibility of rationing the NHS and the £20bn cuts it's facing over the next few years.

Even the most senior GPs have been known to misdiagnose death and, by the time Dr C-T had reached the NHS Alliance conference last week, he'd backtracked and announced that PBC was not terribly well but at least still breathing. His metaphor was promptly eclipsed by NHS chief executive David Nicholson, who warned NHS staff of all the "beer traps" ahead. Cheers!

M.D.



SIGNAL FAILURES

IN 2005 Labour stripped regional transport authorities of their say in new rail franchises. But when Rochdale-Manchester trains were cut this month, money to ease overcrowding had to come from… the regional transport authority!

Rochdale has two railways to Manchester. The one via Oldham closed on 3 October to be converted into a tramline. The carriages from the Oldham line were dumped in sidings instead of switching to the remaining Rochdale line where trains were already overcrowded before 3 October. Those trains were so packed after 3 October many passengers were left behind at stations.

Department for Transport (DafT) ministers and civil servants saw no point paying to reinstate missing carriages so far away from their desks in London. And Northern Rail, the franchisee, didn't see why it should pay the operating costs of extra carriages just so its customers could get on its trains. Thus Manchester's transport authority coughed up, "bitterly disappointed" by the meanness of DafT and Northern.

DafT's intransigence is not new. Passengers still suffer from the DafT decision in 2007 to cut Liverpool-Manchester-Nottingham trains from three to two carriages. And in 2006 DafT's cut to Cardiff-Bristol-Portsmouth trains led to First Great Western's legendary overcrowding and passenger strikes. Last year DafT restored the third carriage on those trains (claiming credit for "extra capacity"). The fourth carriage already needed at peak times is pencilled in by… 2019.

SEASON tickets save admin costs for train companies, but GoVia franchises aren't keen to pass on the savings to all their passengers.

"Our season tickets offer great discounts for regular travellers," says GoVia's London Midland Trains, boasting of savings for passengers who buy tickets "to the same place more than three times a week". But an *Eye* reader from Ledbury, who occasionally buys LMT weekly season tickets, investigated local fares and found most of the Ledbury weeklies he checked cost more than four "anytime" returns (valid for peak travel). A Ledbury-Droitwich weekly costs more than five anytime returns, so passengers wouldn't save even if travelling five days a week.

On its Southern franchise, GoVia helpfully shows how one weekly ticket (Brighton-London) could save more than £100 a week, but it doesn't mention that a Horley-Brighton weekly costs 4.5 times the anytime return. On GoVia's Southeastern franchise, a Sevenoaks-Tunbridge Wells weekly costs 5.7 times the anytime return. A Swanley-Maidstone weekly costs 6.3 times, so even passengers travelling six days a week would be ripped off. No wonder GoAhead, GoVia's main shareholder, can afford £200,000 in special bonuses for two executives (see *Eye* 1245).

IS the rail industry's ban on print-at-home tickets (*Eye* 1238) a ploy to collect two fares for one journey?

An *Eye* reader from Blackpool who bought tickets to Perth from thetrainline.com was told they couldn't be posted to him but must be collected at Preston station, 20 miles away. As *Eye* 1238 reported, train firms don't allow passengers to travel without tickets to their nearest ticket-collection point, even if they can prove they bought a valid ticket online.

The reader was obviously meant to pay again for Blackpool-Preston, adding 20 percent to his fare. He'd seen a passenger in the same situation forced to buy a Blackpool-Preston ticket despite showing the online booking receipt, collection number and credit card. Refusing to play the game, our reader collected his tickets with a 40-mile car trip.

'Dr B. Ching'

The Agri Brigade

WHEN Waitrose rescued Prince Charles's ailing Duchy Originals brand last month in return for exclusive rights to HRH's organic snacks, it highlighted problems across the UK's organic movement.

2009 has been tough for both the aristocrats who head up much of the UK's £2.1bn organic food industry and the farmers who break their backs hand-weeding the cauliflowers, milking the cows or carrying their crates of produce to farmers' market stalls.

The rot set in with organic food as soon as the credit crunch bit. Even relatively well heeled Waitrose customers fled the organic aisle for the chain's newly-launched discount "Essentials" range; and the slump in sales of Duchy Originals is typical of many organic foods in the UK over the past year.

Falling sales have meant falling prices. Organic lamb, for example, is now so dirt cheap at the farm gate that the combined extra marketing and transport costs of moving sheep from isolated farms to an organically-certified slaughterhouse can often no longer be justified.

So are farmers giving organic production the proverbial finger? Hardly. The amount of UK farmland in organic production is in fact rising annually by near double-digit percentages. Even in the recession, production of organic vegetables, cereals, cattle, sheep and pork all rose by between 18 and 40 percent between 2008/9.

With organic production rising even as prices fall, could this have anything to do perhaps with the "Organic Entry Level Stewardship" (OELS) subsidy scheme? Overseen by Natural England, the giant conservation quango with an annual budget of £176m, OELS pays farmers £650 per hectare over five years to convert their land to organic production.

Scotland has been here before. Between 1999 and 2001 there was a surge in interest in organic farming that happened to coincide with generous "conversion" subsidies. In 2004, as those conversion payments began to dry up, Scottish hill farmers – traditionally more closely associated with canny business acumen than principles of environmental sustainability – renounced their organic status in droves.

Meanwhile those at the top of the organisations that represent organic and conventional farmers persist in thinking their members have loftier concerns than simply chasing government handouts. For decades the Soil Association and the National Farmers Union have bickered about the safety of genetically modified crops, the conservation benefits of organic farming and the dangers of agri-chemical residues in food or drinking water, convinced that their members give an organic fig about such issues.

For farmers the thinking is rather more down to earth. With the profitability of conventional and organic food production at an all time low, it's the subsidy, stupid, that counts.

'New Bio-waste Spreader'

Letters

A postie writes...

Sir,

I'm a postman from West London. When I started seven years ago, I had one manager and thirty-eight postman to cover this postcode. We now have twenty-seven postmen and two managers. For the last two years and up until a month ago I had three managers. All of these managers and all of those above them will get a bonus, starting at around 10% of their salary. This bonus is based not on quality or performance but merely on budget. They are virtually guaranteed this bonus as we have lost a further two jobs. Obviously ordinary postmen are not party to this scheme.

We have a disparate workforce with ages starting from 18 all the way to 64. Our older postman cannot sustain the same walking pace as the younger members and some cannot now complete their longer routes within their paid hours. Our older postmen bring other strengths to the job, including, in my experience, a much greater concern for quality of service and a deep local knowledge. No allowance is made for the varying speeds and no attempt is made to make the quicker ones help the slower ones.

There is an argument to be had about mail volumes but it is without question that we have had around 1,000 addresses added to this postcode since the last wave of job cuts. These all need delivering to whether they have 1 or 10 letters.

Clearly there is much to this strike but I would just like the public to get an idea of how we're run.

Yours sincerely,
NAME & ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

Via email.

Knacker nicked

Sir,

I see in Eye 1246 that schools are using similar tactics to prisons to smooth over the official visits from inspectors. I can add the police stations to this list. Whenever a HM Inspector is due to knock on the nick's front door the management ensure that all outlying police stations are fully manned and the HMI itinerary is full of meetings with tame officers and staff who can be relied on to sing from the corporate hymn sheet.

No wonder then that the "mystery shopper" tactics recently employed to test whether Knacker really is sticking to the Policing Pledge found many forces wanting. Most unfair! Calling at police stations without an appointment. Anybody would think this was a public service!

JUNIOR KNACKER,

Via email.

Carbon dating

Sir,

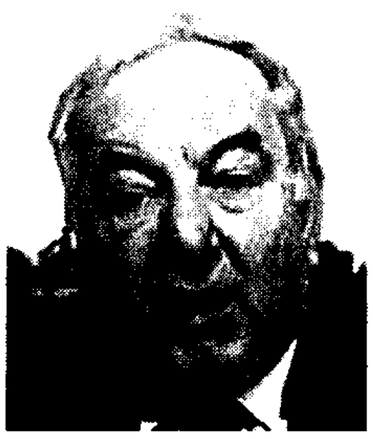
Running Friends of the Earth, Green Alliance and being an enthusiast for carbon capture and storage (CCS) may or may not qualify Tom Burke as an expert on climate change ('Climate Change Latest' Eye 1247). What it does not do is qualify him as an expert on an energy policy having at its core a secure energy supply at an affordable price. CCS may prove to be scalable to the necessary GigaWatt scale at a cost which does not throw millions more into fuel poverty, or it may not. Mr Burke certainly is unable to answer this question because at the moment nobody can.

Similarly, subsidised low waste costs could be a bargaining lever for the nuclear industry ('Tories in Manchester', Eye 1247). Alternatively, it could be viewed as a tool to ensure that the national waste repository, when built, is designed based on sound technical and engineering bases, not on political ones. For example, there is no technical reason at all for waste to be packaged to be retrievable into the future, unless future generations wish to make use of the fissile assets likely to be stored if we do not follow the common sense approach and recover them now.

Yours,
ANDREW MARTIN,

Via email.

Lookalike



Fields

Foulkes

Sir,

Uncanny! Lord Foulkes of Cumnock and W.C. Fields...

JOHN BIDWELL,

Tenterden, Kent.

Bee in bonnet

Sir,

Contrary to your article (Honey Trap, Eye 1247), there is no conflict of interest in Syngenta part-funding research into bee health. Bees play a vital part in agriculture by pollinating crops. Syngenta wants to understand all the causes of the decline in bee populations and to find ways to protect them. For this reason, the role of pesticides will be included in the completely independent research. Rothamsted and Warwick University are free to publish all their findings, Syngenta will encourage them to do so.

ANDREW COKER,

Head of Corporate Affairs UK, Syngenta.

By Jupiter!

Sir,

I am deeply impressed and more than a little grateful at Mr. Daly's in-depth and profound dismissal of Mozart as "the musical equivalent of froth on a cappuccino" (Letters, Eye 1247).

Perhaps he might consider listening to the Jupiter Symphony, The Marriage of Figaro and the Sinfonia Concertante whilst sipping said cappuccino in the secure ward in which he currently resides.

Sincerely,
JAMES RHODES,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See

"My wife and I were wondering – could you play some Lady Gaga?"

Playground bullies

Sir,

The chair of governors of Archbishop Tenison's voluntary-aided Church of England secondary school for boys, Robert Moreland, writes to defend his school's intention, supported by Lambeth council, to annex London's oldest adventure playground, The Triangle (Letters, Eye 1247). His school needs the community playground, he claims, "to ensure [it] has playground area for its pupils" who endure, he says, "the most cramped play space of any secondary school in London". He dismisses the Eye's suggestion that the space might be intended to provide a new car park when the school is improved next year under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Odd then, for a school so limited for space, that it currently reserves a 20-place teachers' car-park on its own tiny playground, especially when its prospectus trumpets the excellence of its public transport connections. Odd, too, that plans for the school's development (seen under FoI) clearly show that the improvements can be achieved without nicking the Triangle from the local community – but that the primary use for the land if Lambeth did allow the school to do so would be... a car-park.

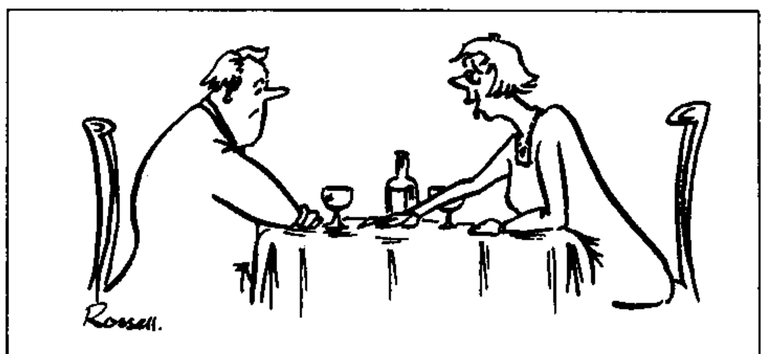
Moreland goes on to justify having declared the scruffy Triangle "a disgraceful waste of space". He meant it, he says, in reference to "the lack of availability of the space during the school day". Short memory. He was present at meetings earlier this year when the committee of volunteers that maintains the Triangle offered to make their playground available to the school's pupils at break times. The offer was never taken up.

He insists his school is gracious towards its council estate neighbours and adduces the use by locals of what he refers to as the school's football area. This happens, he says magnanimously, "with the blessing of the school". Short memory again. Although the school kept it under lock and key until recently, the pitch was financed by public money to encourage community use of out-of-hours school premises. It's not in the school's gift at all – the community has a right to use it.

In the light of all this, just how seriously can we take Mr Moreland's reasons for attempting to strip inner-city council kids of the only safe play place they have to call their own?

Yours sincerely,
JIM CLANCEY,

Chair, Triangle Adventure Playground Association.



"It isn't that I don't love you any more. If it helps, I never loved you at all!"

Piloti sunk

Sir,

No matter what Piloti may feel about the disposal of Southampton City Council's art works (Eye 1247), his taking issue with the City's claim to be the "home of the Titanic" seems a little harsh.

Contrary to his claim, the Titanic did indeed begin its voyage from Southampton, by 1912 firmly established as the UK's premier transatlantic liner port, before making calls at Cherbourg and Queenstown. The grudging assertion that "some of the crew may have been local" is also wide of the mark. A trawl through the death roll from the Titanic (which is available online) will reveal that a substantial proportion of the engineering crew, the stewards, cooks and other ancillary staff, even the much-feted bandsmen, had their homes in the Southampton area.

As a measure of the degree of loss felt by the City, it is notable that some 100,000 people attended the unveiling of the memorial to the ship's engineers in East Park on 22 April 1914. It may well be that the planned "Sea City" development is open to criticism on architectural grounds, but to downplay the City of Southampton's connection to the Titanic tragedy is offensive both to the crew members who perished and their surviving relatives.

Yours,
MICHAEL BAXANDALL,
Ilkley, West Yorkshire.

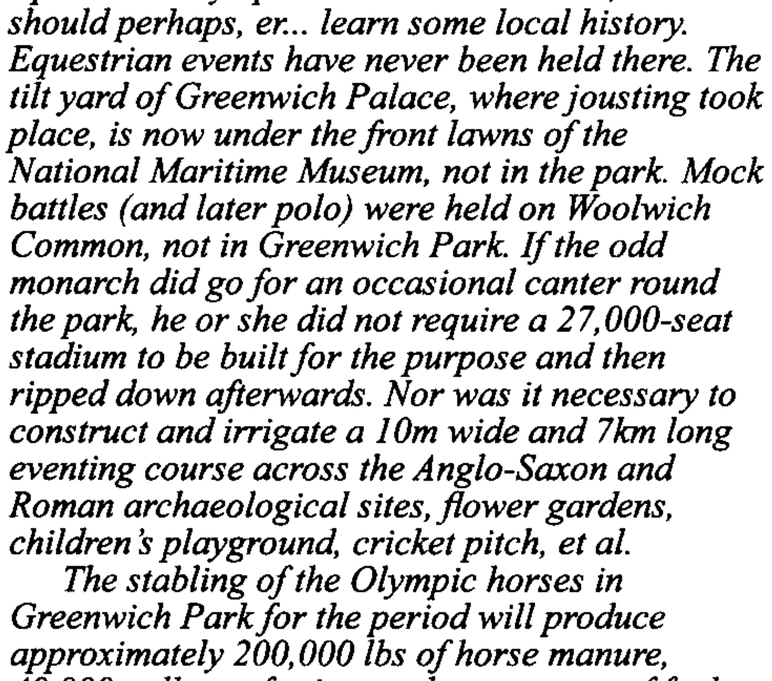
Stinking manure

Sir,

If Tom Frost (Letters, Eye 1247) wants to use local history to criticise Piloti's exposure of the vandalistic idiocy of trying to hold the 2012 equestrian Olympics in Greenwich Park, he should perhaps, er... learn some local history. Equestrian events have never been held there. The tilt yard of Greenwich Palace, where jousting took place, is now under the front lawns of the National Maritime Museum, not in the park. Mock battles (and later polo) were held on Woolwich Common, not in Greenwich Park. If the odd monarch did go for an occasional canter round the park, he or she did not require a 27,000-seat stadium to be built for the purpose and then ripped down afterwards. Nor was it necessary to construct and irrigate a 10m wide and 7km long eventing course across the Anglo-Saxon and Roman archaeological sites, flower gardens, children's playground, cricket pitch, et al.

The stabling of the Olympic horses in Greenwich Park for the period will produce approximately 200,000 lbs of horse manure, 40,000 gallons of urine, and twenty tons of foul straw. This is ideal breeding ground for stable flies and, as a single pair of such flies can produce several million offspring, the Olympic legacy for Greenwich may not be not quite what Lord Coe promises. There are many reasons why Olympic horse events have never been held before in an urban park. Five tons of horseshit per day is one of them.

RUSSELL VALLANCE,
London SE16.



Down memorabilia lane

Sir,

Please say it's true, that you didn't fiddle or digitally alter that photo of the Beatles sitting at what appears to be a greasy spoon caff reading what clearly appears to be a copy of Private Eye (Letters, Eye 1247). As a collector of early Private Eyes, all the way back to Number One of October 25, 1961, one of the most valuable number ones of any national organ (now worth thousands, for only 500 were printed), and also of Beatles memorabilia, I was thrilled to see two of my collecting passions coming together.

I do hope it is genuine. If so, what was the date of the photo and the attractive-looking location?

HUNTER DAVIES,
London NW5.

● The photo is indeed genuine, and prints are available at www.gettyimages.com. The photographer was Paul Popper and the magazine is *Private Eye* No. 37 (May 1963). The location is described as "a canteen". Ed.

OPERA LOVERS. Porky & Bess in the Wales Millenium Centre, sung by wourld touring Cape Town Opera,

Classified ad – Cambrian Trader

"Hold on! He's miming!"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He [Nikolay Valuev] is a huge man. He's got arms like tree-trunks, his legs are like forests..."
DAVID SMITH, BBC London
(Martin Waplington)

"If we're going to send people out to die for their country, then we're going to give them the equipment they need."
JEREMY HUNT, MP
(Patrick Brogan)

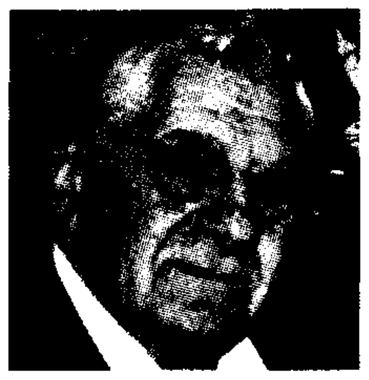
"How do you get your two best midfielders to play well together? Capello, unlike his successors, has the answer."
JAMIE REDKNAPP, Daily Mail
(Kevin Pearce)

"... I think I'm anally tidy..."
Contestant, Come Dine With Me
(M. Cooper)

"It's one of those oblong balls, and it's in his area."
STEVE CLARIDGE, BBC1
(Nick Wharton)

Lookalike

Balon


Fredricksen

Sir,

Having recently watched Disney/Pixar's "Up" in 3D, for some reason I couldn't get Norman Balon ("London's rudest landlord") out of my head and was on the edge of my seat waiting for the Carl Fredricksen character to shout "You're barred!"

NOEL DONNELLON,
London W1.

Last-Ever Pseudo Names (cont.)

... This feature is now so clapped-out that you must surely have an ulterior motive for keeping it going.

Q.E. BONO.

... I see you're threatening to wind up the Pseudo Names correspondence yet again. Go on then – see if we care.

F. OFF
D. LOTTAYA.

... Tragedy!

HARRY STOPHANEES
SAUL GREEKTUMMY.

... They'll haunt you forever.

HECTOR PLAZUM.

... Here in South Korea, it is beyond us why people continue endlessly to send in letters, signing them with what are clearly made-up names.

Y. KI PON.

... Please do not stop this wonderful column. We are sailing to China and in the long hours we entertain ourselves by re-reading your lovely magazine and especially Pseudo Names. Do continue.

HONOR SLOH-BOHT.

... As a Frenchman recently made redundant, I find myself with time to indulge in pointless past-times.

GUY ZAJOB.

... Far from ending, surely this feature heralds a new Age of Aquarius.

WENDY MOON
S.N. DE SAVANT-HOUSE
ANNE JUPITER
ELAINE SWIFT-MARRS.

Pedantry Corner

... I say, chaps, do try to keep up at the back. "Pudendas" ('Books and Bookmen', p. 26, Eye 1246)? "Pudenda" is already plural, like "media" and "bacteria" and "phenomena" and "data". And, oh yes, "panini" too, though that's Italian, of course, not borrowed directly from Greek and/or Latin.

CATHERINE ATHERTON.

... I suggest that you take care before accepting the authenticity of your correspondent "A. Hitler (Reichsführer, Ret'd)". The Reichsführer in the Third Reich was Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS etc. Adolf Hitler was the Führer, withoutqualification.

DAVID DAMANT.

Letter from **Sofia**

from Our Own Correspondent

WE are thrilled to have a new prime minister here in Bulgaria: the thick-necked crime fighter Boyko Borissov, whose very life reflects the strange progress of our little Balkan state in the last two decades.

Before the "changes" Boyko was bodyguard to our late, unlamented communist tyrant Todor Zhivkov. Early on – in 1991 – he got into private security, the one growth industry in those chaotic days; and we Bulgarians have fond memories of his company, IPON-1, which provided a full-range of services at reasonable prices.

In 2001 the loveable, pie-faced rogue became deputy interior minister. It's this experience as much as anything that persuades us he will succeed where so many have failed in eradicating the more objectionable Bulgarian activities, like assassinating business rivals and stealing EU structural funds.

During his four years in charge of the police there were 28 contract killings in Bulgaria. None was solved, but that's hardly the point. Although he recently bought a suit, Boyko's traditional attire – black t-shirt, leather jacket, no hair – suggests an invaluable familiarity with organised crime.

Next came a spell as mayor of Sofia; but our boy had his eye on the top job and at the same time set up his own party, GERB. Sure enough, in July this year GERB swept to victory in the general election and now he's the boss.

We have high hopes, from a low base, as the economists put it. We are going through a deep recession, foreign investment has more or less stopped and our living standards will take a generation to converge with EU average levels. It doesn't help that Brussels has suspended hundreds of millions in structural funds because of our endemic corruption.

Boyko's crusade against the nefarious is therefore long overdue. So how's it going? Well, it's early days, but we're deluged with reports of activity in various ministries. One of the most important weapons is our State Agency for National Security (DANS), which combines the former internal security service, military counter intelligence and financial intelligence and answers directly to the prime minister.

Alas, DANS is beset by carping critics who claim it's nothing more than a tool for monopolizing power. Our NATO allies don't help much either: some of their intelligence services refuse to share information with DANS on the grounds that it's leaky, particularly in the direction of Moscow.

An early sign of progress is the judicial investigation into Hristo Kovachki, an entrepreneur in the energy business. Many people think he's dodgy and that the Capone-like investigation into his tax affairs is long overdue. There's really only one outstanding question about Boyko's clean-up campaign, and even that's just a technical point: does he intend to reduce criminal groups to zero or one?

We're watching intently to see what comes after Kovachki. Remembering Boyko's long experience in law enforcement, it seems clear he must know about some of the most golden mafia scams. He cannot be unaware, for example, that tankers are still covertly delivering millions of tonnes of contraband oil to the Black Sea coast. He may also have heard rumours of refined oil being siphoned from pipes and distributed to independent petrol stations. Only the worst sort of cynic would assume these industrial-scale crimes will continue unmolested for much longer.

He's busy too on the foreign policy front. Under his old boss Todor Zhivkov we were known as the "loyal satellite" of the USSR. Now Boyko is mending bridges with our Russian cousins, and again it's all about energy. We're on board for Gazprom's South Stream pipeline (a rival to the European Nabucco pipeline) and the planned Belene nuclear reactor will run on Russian technology. Despite the draw of all that European Union money, there are no friends like old friends.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

o "You cannot lay a criminal charge against a maid for putting menstrual blood into soup which is then cooked," solicitor Wong Kwok-tung told reporters outside Kwun Tong Magistrates' Court in Hong Kong. "Even if she puts in saliva or a cockroach, it is not a criminal action. It would be different if the menstrual blood or the cockroach was found in a dish served in a restaurant, but if a maid does it in a private house, it is a purely civil matter. The only thing the employer can do is to fire her immediately, and seek to ban her from working anywhere in Hong Kong."

Wong was commenting after prosecutors dropped all charges against Indra Ningsih, an Indonesian maid who had been accused of administering poison to her employers, the Mok family. As reported previously (*Eye* 1239), she admitted that "Mr Mok was unhappy with my performance, so when I was preparing dinner, I tried an old Indonesian potion to improve our relationship. I added a used sanitary towel to the cooking water, to make him more amicable and less picky."

Prosecutors decided that the charge of poisoning could not be sustained after a government laboratory ruled that menstrual blood could not be toxic, although it could carry a virus. *(The Standard [Hong Kong], 16/7/09. Spotter: Dr George Adams)*

– o –

o *"Until recently, Haizhu bridge was the city's number one choice for committing suicide," government spokesman Shiu Liang told reporters in Guangzhou. "We were plagued with traffic jams, caused by drivers who slowed down to watch suicide victims leaping to their death. We tried employing guards at both ends of the bridge, but that didn't work. We erected special fences, and put up notices asking people not to commit suicide here, but it had no effect. However, our decision to cover the entire bridge in butter has worked very well. Now, nobody can get up high enough to jump off, and everybody who tries just falls harmlessly back down."*

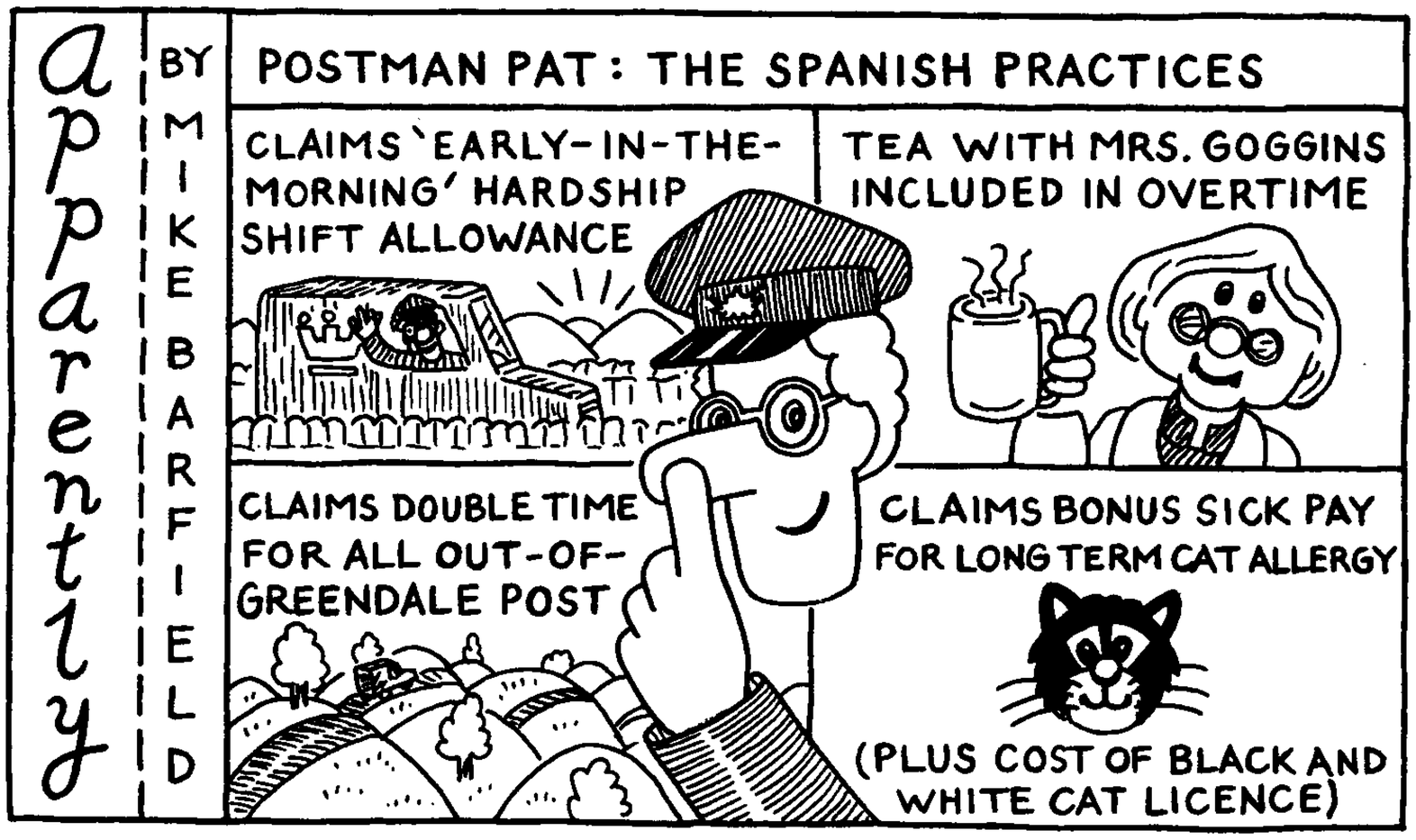
Bridge guard Wong Mian was also enthusiastic about the decision to cover the entire 1,000 foot-long steel bridge in fat. "The butter makes the bars and frames slippery and hard to climb onto," he added, "and we can easily catch anyone who tries. In one month earlier this year, eight people committed suicide on this bridge, and dozens of others climbed up onto the frame and threatened to commit suicide before changing their minds. Every time someone tried to get sympathy or media attention, we had several hours of tailbacks, and there were lots of complaints. But since we put up the butter, there have been no more problems with these attention seekers." (China Daily, 3/9/09. Spotter: Mal Function)

– o –

o "The man who threw the rock through the window clearly knew what he was looking for," manager Christy Patterson told reporters in the Airport Video adult store in Mobile, Alabama, "and it certainly wasn't cash. The security video system shows that he ignored the cash register altogether, went straight to the back of the store, where we keep the big item that he was looking for, and took it. Then he picked up another item that we keep near the front, and started to leave through the

broken window. But he must have remembered something, because he came back for a third item, then left. The items he stole were a life-size inflatable doll, a bottle of lubricant, and a pocket-sized sexual stimulation device called 'Devin's Private Pleasures.' He was obviously a desperate man."

Police spokesman Officer Christopher Levy added "the Airport Video store has an alarm system, but the motion sensor was blocked by a Coke machine, so it never went off. We are distributing the surveillance pictures locally, and are hoping that someone who views them will be able to identify the burglar, and help the victim get his items back. This was clearly a crime of passion, and the man acted on impulse. Anyone with any information should call Crimestoppers at 208-7000." *(Alabama Press Register, 30/6/09. Spotter: Giles Clark)*


Apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
POSTMAN PAT: THE SPANISH PRACTICES
CLAIMS 'EARLY-IN-THE-MORNING' HARDSHIP SHIFT ALLOWANCE
TEA WITH MRS. GOGGINS INCLUDED IN OVERTIME
CLAIMS DOUBLE TIME FOR ALL OUT-OF-GREENDALE POST
CLAIMS BONUS SICK PAY FOR LONG TERM CAT ALLERGY
(PLUS COST OF BLACK AND WHITE CAT LICENCE)

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS EVERY DAY

WHY ARE THE BBC GIVING THE BNP ALL THIS FREE PUBLICITY?

★ See Pages 1-94

PLUS *Pics, Letters, Supplements, Comment, Leaders, Blog etc. etc.*

'Should BBC be allowed on airwaves?'

● The question the nation is asking

MARK THOMPSON, leader of the notorious BBC, was last night at the centre of a growing storm over allowing its highly controversial views to be broadcast.

Thompson heads an organisation with thousands of members, many of whose views are deeply offensive to the vast majority of the British public.

One fierce opponent of the BBC's right to continue broadcasting its "odious propaganda" is Sussex landowner, Charles Moore.

Last night he told us "These people pretend to be sensible, balanced normal individuals, but we know that, beneath the surface, they are just foul-mouthed bullies and thugs, who go round attacking old age pensioners on their answerphones."

No Sacks Please – We're British National Party

But from his headquarters at the aptly named 'White' City, Thompson hit back at his critics saying, "We have every right to be on television, because we are hugely popular all over the country. We are the only organisation which addresses the concerns of ordinary people – ballroom dancing, antique-collecting and snooker."

What do you think?

Should the BBC be kept off the air?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ They should all be sent home

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NICK GRIFFIN

Where do your spoons come from?

I am proud to say that, like Winston Churchill, I possess only British spoons. The import of non-indigenous spoons has done nothing but debase the purity of the spoon-base.

You said in 1983 that you hated black spoons and that you wouldn't ever have one in the house.

Er... I was misquoted... I never actually said that... You're just trying to make me look like Hitler.

Talking of which, you are on record in 1993 as being an admirer of Hitler's pamphlet 'Mein Spoon'.

No, that's not right, I never said that.

I've got the quote here. You said, "Adolf is a very great leader and collector of pure Aryan spoons".

No, no I didn't. And under European Law I can't say anymore or else I'll be prosecuted as a spoon-hater. The majority of ordinary men and women in this country believe as I do that we've got to stop these foreign spoons coming in and filling our cutlery drawers forcing out...

I'afraid that's all we've got time for. I'm not going to ask you if anything amusing has ever happened to you in connection with a spoon because you're a Nazi.

– ❖ –

The editor of *Me and My Spoon* writes in defence of his controversial decision to invite the BNP leader to take part in *Me and My Spoon*

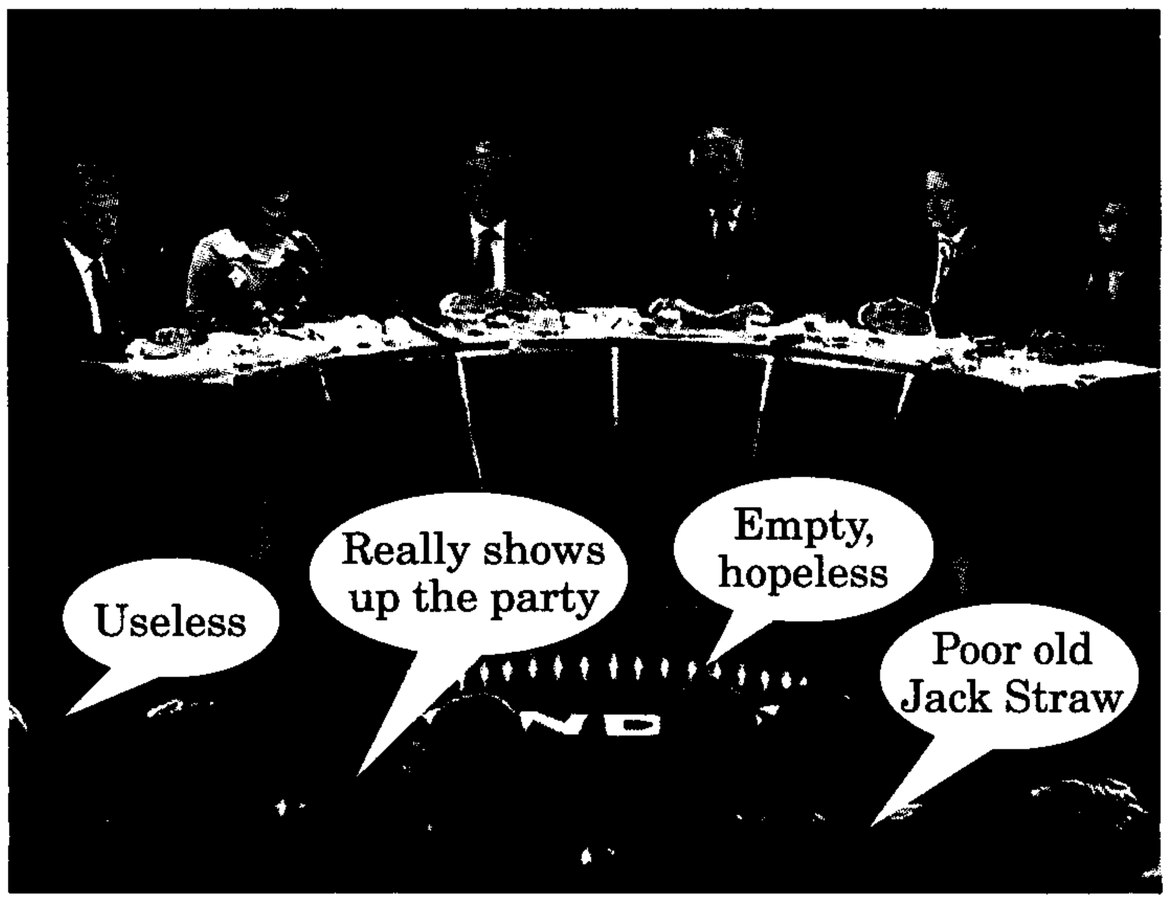
In a democratic society we had no alternative but to invite an elected BNP representative to talk about spoons. Failure to do so would have been an attack on free speech and could well have resulted in a fall in our circulation. Not that I have looked at the figures, but our readership has now gone up to 8 million following Mr Griffin's appearance. Which proves my decision was correct.

On Other Pages

● Should we have given a platform to the Editor of the Spoon Column to defend his decision to invite Nick Griffin to talk about Spoons? **p1**

● How did Griffin perform Spoon-wise? You give your opinion on the BNP leader's answers. **p2**

● What our celebrity panel thought about Griffin on Spoons. A A Gill, Sir Alex Ferguson, Gordon Ramsay, Graham Norton and Cheryl Cole give their verdict on the biggest night in Spoon history. **p3**



"Sorry guys, sales are slow. I'm going to have to let some of you go"

Late News

PRIME MINISTER ISSUES 'STARK WARNING'

GORDON BROWN has issued a stark warning to world leaders such as Barack Obama that they have just 60 days to save Gordon Brown.

"Unless something is done to save me at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, I am doomed.

"Ever-rising poll ratings for the Tories threaten to swamp my party and wipe me off the landscape."

Most world leaders dismissed Brown's apocalyptic warning, saying it was already too late to save him, given that the "Tory warming" witnessed over the past 18 months was now irreversible.

DARLING PROMISES 'BANKING REFORMS'

by Our Financial Correspondent
Hugh Bonus

CHANCELLOR Alistair Darling has brushed aside criticisms of inaction, promising that sweeping reforms to curb Mervyn King would be in place by the New Year.

"The very real threat posed by Mervyn King to our friends in the City lining their pockets with mega-bonuses hasn't gone away," an ashen-faced Darling told reporters.

"We are exploring all avenues for clawing back what few powers he has.

"My government remains fully committed to reining in the worst excesses of Mervyn King's speeches."

Royal Mail

Dear Customer,

This is to let you know that both management and unions here at the Royal Mail are working together to ensure that the present dispute does **not** ruin your Christmas. That is why we are jointly trying to avoid any settlement so that **you** will have a card-free Christmas!

Just think how much you will save in terms of time and money by not sending or receiving any of the following:

- Coaching scenes in snow.
- Robin on Yule Log.
- Father Christmas on sleigh.
- Detail from Nativity scene by obscure Renaissance Italian Master Umberto Ungnoni (1328-1574?) reprinted courtesy of the Museum de Bruges.
- Boring round-robin from the Hendersons telling you about their holiday in Cyprus and their daughter-in-law's new baby Cheryl. *(That's enough cards, Ed.)*

'Delivering a Stress-Free Christmas'

BLAIR FOR EU PRESIDENT

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Sir Ludovic Kennedy: broadcaster, atheist and campaigner for euthanasia.

So. Farewell
Then Ludovic Kennedy,
Famous broadcaster,
Atheist and
Campaigner for
Euthanasia.

Now you have died
With dignity.

But you could be
In for a
Shock.

Also farewell
Then to Joseph
Wiseman.

You played Dr No
In the first Bond film.

"Goodbye Mr Bond."
That was your
Catchphrase.

"Goodbye Dr No."
That is mine.

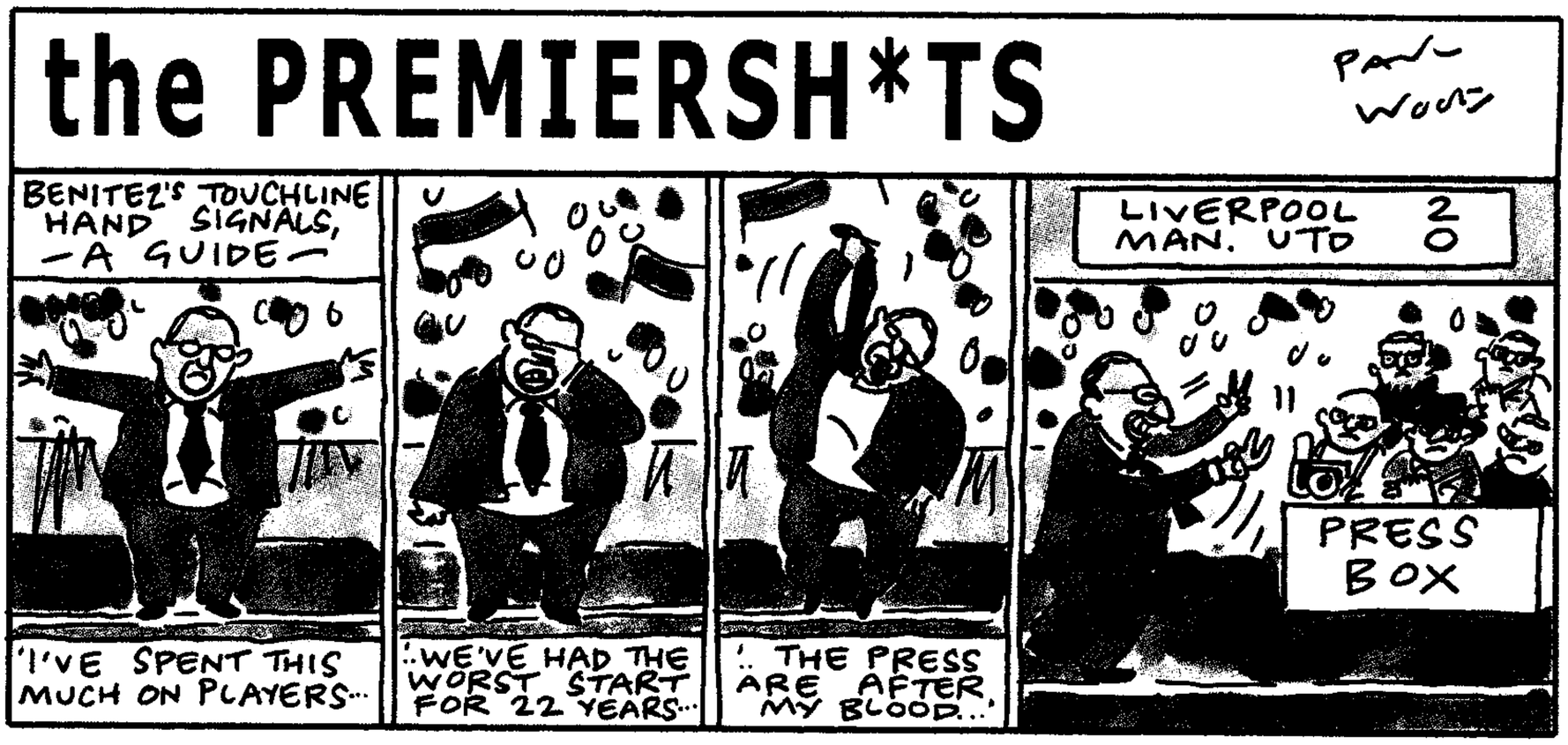
E.J. Thribb (17½)

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES

The Grand Old Duke of York
He had ten thousand air miles
He flew half way around the world
And then he flew back again
To give an interview to the FT
Saying how terrific rich people were.

© *The Financial Times*

the PREMIERSH*TS


BENITEZ'S TOUCHLINE HAND SIGNALS, —A GUIDE—
'I'VE SPENT THIS MUCH ON PLAYERS...
'..WE'VE HAD THE WORST START FOR 22 YEARS...
'.. THE PRESS ARE AFTER MY BLOOD...'
LIVERPOOL 2
MAN. UTD 0
PRESS BOX

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 56

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

As you will be aware, I have in recent days been working night and day on your behalf to resolve some of the most important issues ever to face the human race:

- The imminent disaster of global warming (less than 60 days and counting!)
- The reshaping of the entire political system at both world and national level.
- The regulation of the entire international finance system.

These are just some of the intractable questions to which I have been endeavouring to find an answer on behalf of the people of Britain.

But first, let me answer the question which I know will be uppermost in all your minds at this time – what is my favourite type of biscuit?

When this question was first put to me by one of our leading new media organisations, *yummie-mummy.com*, I naturally set up an expert committee to look into the matter, under the chairmanship of our new "Biscuit Czar" Comrade Lord Mandelson.

The committee's brief was to consider all aspects of biscuit choice and suitability, bearing in mind all the implications of whatever choice might be arrived at, such as regional origin, ethnicity, price accessibility and so forth.

The initial list of biscuit types rejected by the committee was as follows:

Rich Tea Clearly unsuitable during the present period of austerity, due to association with the capitalist parasite class, bankers, etc.

Jammy Dodgers Unfortunate association with Comrade MPs who are trying to avoid paying back their cleaning bills, gardening expenses, mortgages, etc.

Duchy Originals Irrevocably linked to feudal parasite Prince Charles.

HobNobs Irrevocably linked with Bullingdonian-Cameronite-Osbornist aristocratic "nobs".

Running Dog Biscuits Suitable only for canines, eg Comrade Blunkett's dog "Debo".

Ginger Nuts Unfortunate association with mental health issues of the type raised by the hated BBC jackal ex-Comrade Andrew Marr.

Cream Crackers See mental health issue above.

After many hours of intensive research and discussion, including consultation with a specially selected focus group, the committee advised me as follows:

"After careful consideration, the committee reached the conclusion that the favourite biscuit of the Supreme Leader should display the following attributes: it should be popular, inexpensive, easily available, nutritionally balanced, obtainable from sustainable sources, fairly traded, and indicative of the general good taste and discrimination of theSupreme Leader.

That is why we recommend that the Supreme Leader's reply to the question 'What is your favourite biscuit?' should be 'Something biscuit-y'."

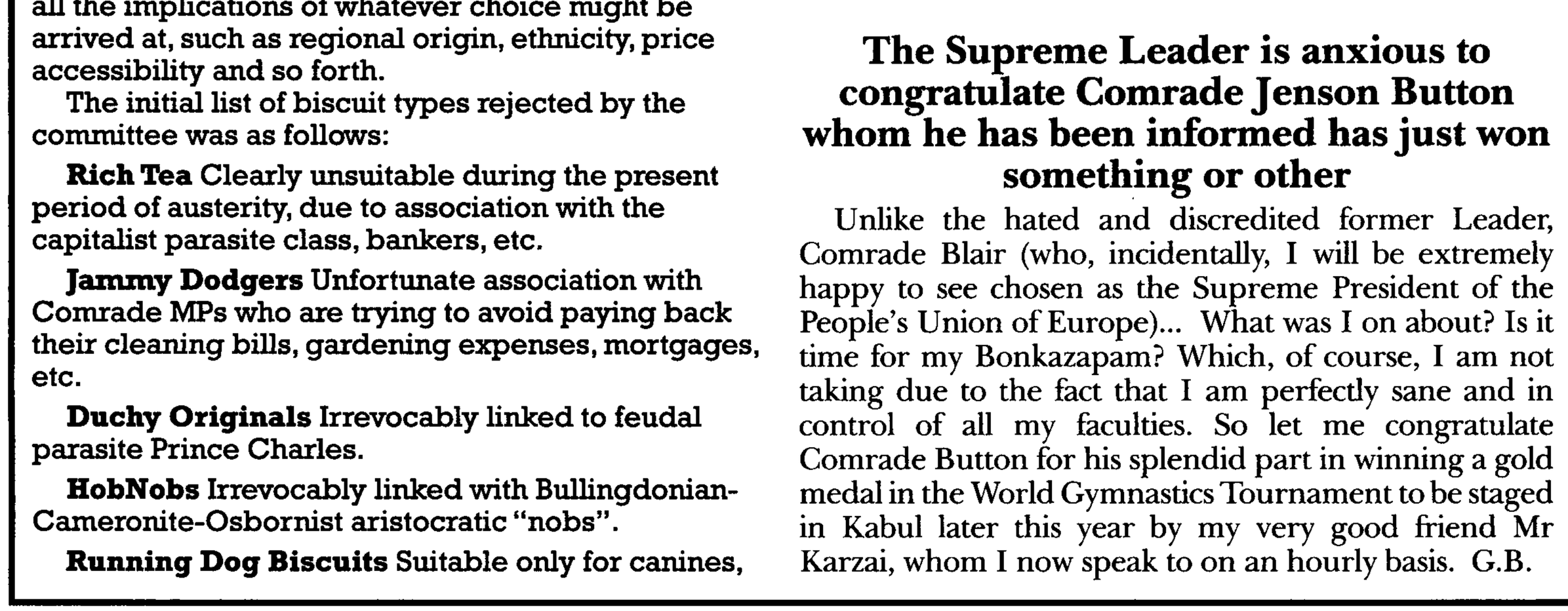
As to the other questions which have been on my desk this week, as outlined above, all of these can be easily resolved in the weeks ahead by a Supreme Leader equipped with a cup of tea and his favourite type of biscuit.

Yours, Gordon Brown

The Supreme Leader

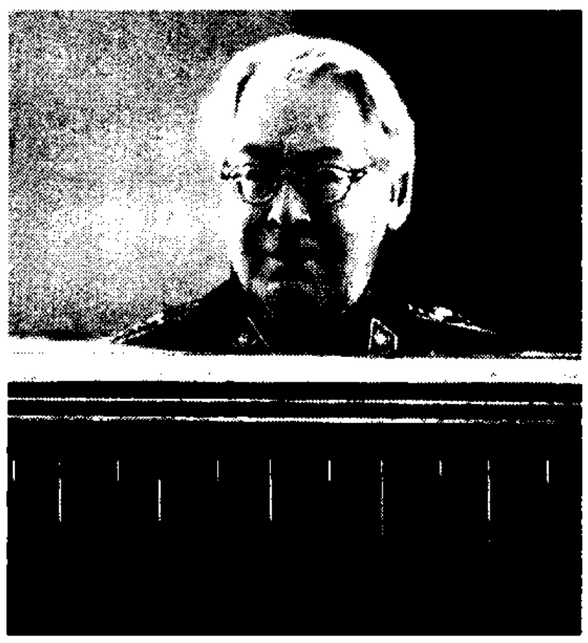
The Supreme Leader is anxious to congratulate Comrade Jenson Button whom he has been informed has just won something or other

Unlike the hated and discredited former Leader, Comrade Blair (who, incidentally, I will be extremely happy to see chosen as the Supreme President of the People's Union of Europe)... What was I on about? Is it time for my Bonkazapam? Which, of course, I am not taking due to the fact that I am perfectly sane and in control of all my faculties. So let me congratulate Comrade Button for his splendid part in winning a gold medal in the World Gymnastics Tournament to be staged in Kabul later this year by my very good friend Mr Karzai, whom I now speak to on an hourly basis. G.B.


THE BROON-ITES
THE MACHIAVELLIAN MINISTERS MAKING A MESS OF THE MAIL SERVICE!
Fountain and Jamieson
HOOTS! LOOK AT PA BROON GRINNIN'!
AY, YE WIDNAE KEN HE'D JUST CREATED A STRAMASH OF A POSTAL STRIKE, THA' NOO...
BURGERS
KEBAB BAR
CONTENTED PUFFS
JOCKSHIRE POST
POSTAL STRIKE
JOCKSHIRE POST
MAIR POSTAL STRIKES TAE COME
JOCKSHIRE POST
PRIVATE EYE ANNUAL 2009 ON SALE HERE THE NOO, JIMMY!
JOCKSHIRE POST
OF COURSE! AH KEN WHY PA BROON'S SO BONNY...
WHY'S THAT, ANGUS?
HE'LL GET NAE MAIR HATE MAIL FOR AT LEAST THREE DAYS!
JOCKSHIRE SORTING DEPOT
ONE OOT ALL OOT
DOON WITH STUFF
JUST SAYIN NOO
YAWN
ROYAL MAIL
ROYAL MAIL
ROYAL MAIL
BUOYANT BLAST OF BONHOMIE
TERRIFIC TOOTLE
TO BAMPOT BROON
TO BLOODY PA BROON
TO THAT SCUNNER IN No 10
HENRY DAVIES

Enemy of the People No. 94

Ex-Comrade Mervyn King, Governor of the People's Bank of Britain



This inflated nobody has seen fit to criticise the Supreme Leader's efforts to save our dedicated and hard-working bankers.

How dare he try to stop them carrying out their vital national task of gambling the taxpayers' money on currency speculation and derivatives trading in order to fund their well-earned bonuses?

What does this pampered and pea-brained dilettante know of banking, I ask?

If he wishes to keep his job, he must learn to leave running the economy to those of us who have vastly more experience of these matters than he ever will.

If Comrade King had been in charge, with his anti-bankerist prejudices, can you imagine what would have happened? Britain would have stumbled into a major crisis, with the government forced to bail out all the banks with billions of pounds of taxpayers' money.

How fortunate the British people are that Comrade King holds no position of importance, and that he is only running the People's Bank and not the country. G.B.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

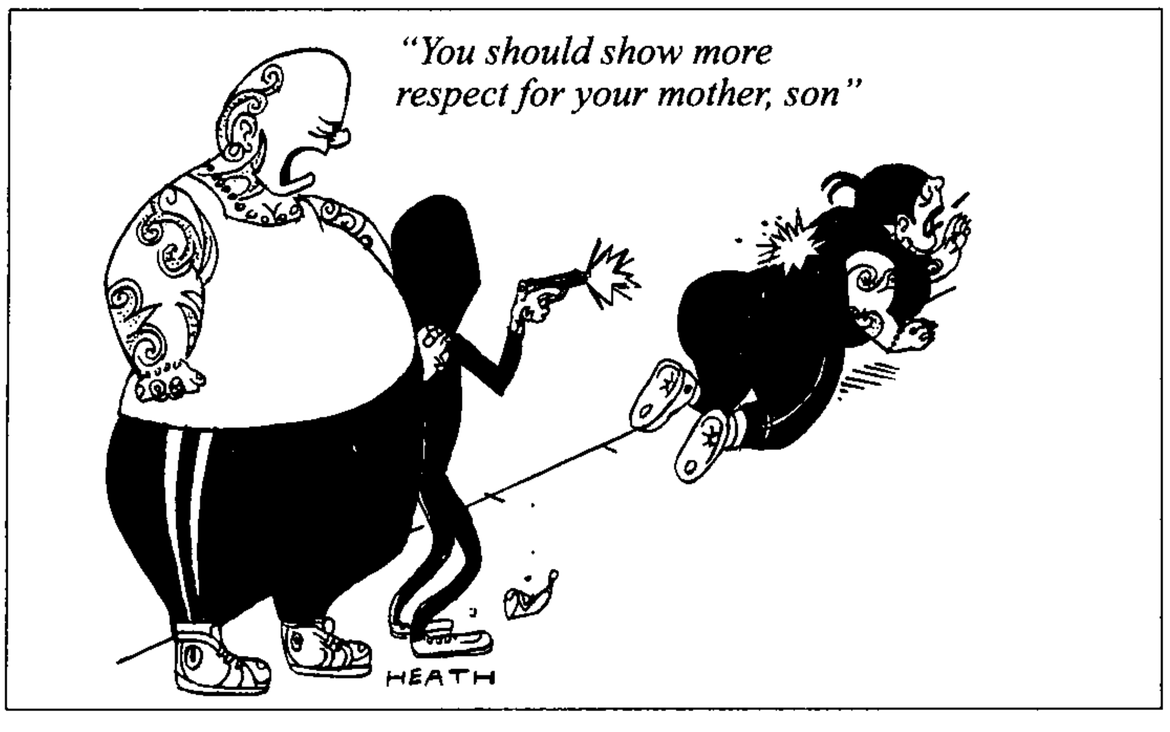
The running dogs of the Cameronite-Bullingdonian claque are trumpeting their adoption of "All-Women Shortlists" as a pathetic stunt to gain popularity.

Comrades will be fully aware that our Party pioneered this idea many years ago, with the result that my Government has become the envy of the world for the calibre and distinction of its team of female Commissars.

Let us salute the extraordinary achievements of these heroines of the British people:

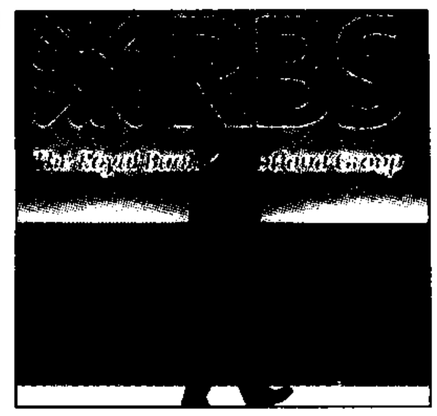
● Comrade Jacqui Smith ● Comrade Hazel Blears ● Comrade Ruth Kelly ● Comrade Baroness Kinnock ● Comrade Margaret Beckett.

And most important of all has been the contribution of Comrade Baroness Scotland, who is incidentally looking for a new cleaner should any comrade be seeking interesting, low-paid work to assist an outstanding public servant. G.B.



EXCLUSIVE

WORLD'S FATTEST CAT LIVES IN BRITAIN SHOCK



by Lunchtime O'Bese

TO MANY he is a source of embarrassment, yet Phillip "Phil" Boots is unashamed to be an obscenely fat cat who sits all day watching his computer screen, consuming vast quantities of money.

Even as huge helpings of cash are brought in to him, he denies being greedy.

Quantitative Eating

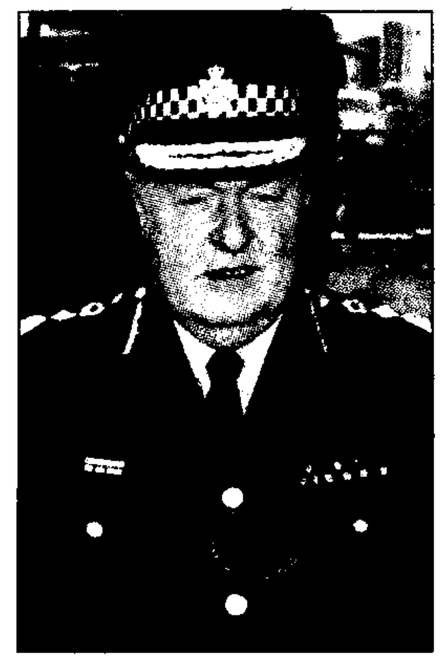
"I've always wanted to be the world's fattest cat and I need to pile on the pounds with a non-stop diet of cheques, options and bonuses."

Mr Boots continued, "It's only fair that I should be subsidised by the taxpayer. It's not my fault I'm such a fat cat. It's everyone's problem."

Something Big In The City

A team of round-the-clock carers from the RBS attend to his every need to ensure that he retains his title as the world's most unpleasant and avaricious banker *(That's enough Fat Cat. Ed.)*

'MY BOYS WERE HEROES AND SHOULD HAVE GOT MEDALS' says Knacker



From the book they're all talking about, Hullo, Hullo, Goodbye – A Chief Constable Looks Back *by Sir Ian Knacker, former head of the Metropolitan Police.*

Chapter 94: *The Sad Accident at Stockwell Underground*

NOTHING gave me more trouble in all my years at the Met than the unfortunate shooting of a Mr de Menezes, a Brazilian gentleman.

I have been made the subject of a great deal of criticism with regard to this sad incident, much of it to my mind unjustified.

What all those people who have complained about this sad business conveniently forget is that, at the time, this country was at war with a worldwide army of terrorists who all had only one thing in mind – to wipe out the city of London and everyone who lived in it.

It has even been said, by those who should know better, that my officers on the day in question, officers D, E, A, T and H, were somehow responsible for the killing of an innocent man.

Let me repeat myself – we were at war.

My officers acted with supreme courage in tackling a man who they had good reason to believe was intent on mass-murder.

Had the unfortunate Brazilian gentleman turned out to be Osama bin Laden, as all the evidence suggested, then my lads would rightly have been acclaimed as national heroes.

The Queen would have received them at Buckingham Palace and showered them with George Crosses, as they richly deserved.

My good friend Mayor Ken Livingstone would have arranged an open-air bus to drive them round the streets of London, in front of vast cheering crowds who would remember it as one of the greatest and happiest days of their lives (except of course the unfortunate Brazilian gentleman).

Tomorrow: *Why my lads should have shot Boris instead.*

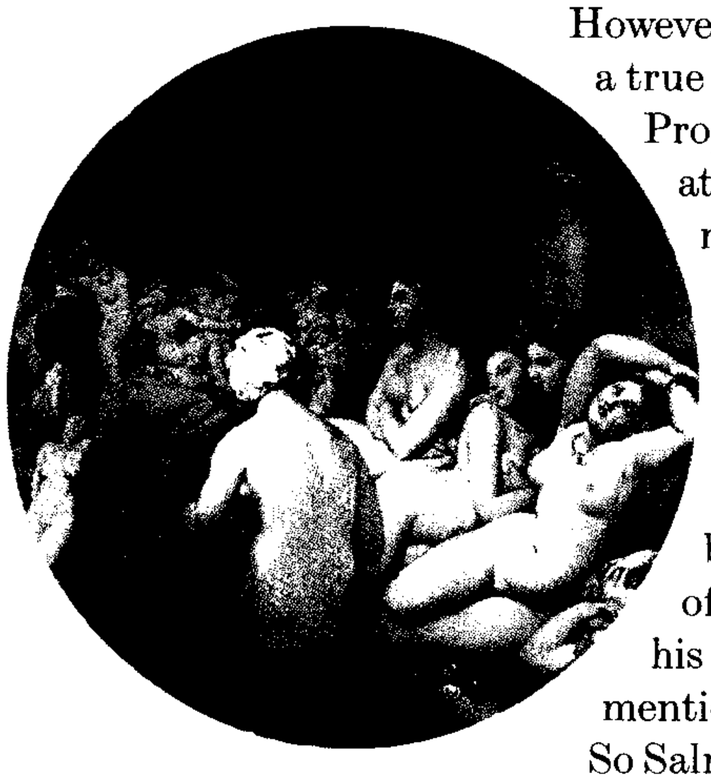
Great Figures From Oriental History No. 94

Salman The Magnificent

THERE lived in those days a very wealthy nobleman who had amassed great treasures from the sale of his scrolls, which were circulated throughout Christendom and also Muslimdom.

Indeed, so fearful were the Ayatollahs of the Islamic lands that they decreed that his scrolls should be burned and that Salman should be put to death.

But Salman prevailed against all his foes and defied the fearsome clerics of the East by producing even more scrolls, which filled the scroll shops of the West even though, as the ancient jesters joked, these literary offerings "failed to ignite".

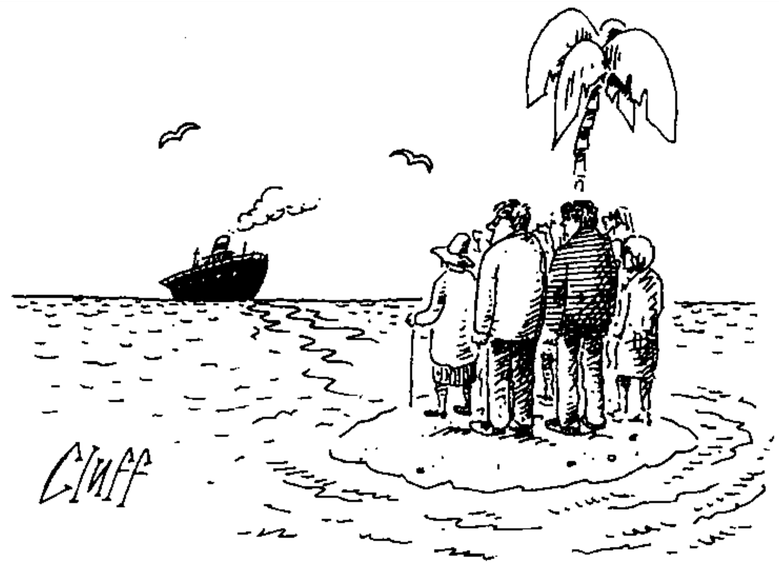


However Salman remained a true follower of the Prophet in one respect at least, in that he had many wives – though not all at the same time. Numerous indeed were the tall stately maidens who were overcome by the magnificence of Salman's beard and his portly girth, not to mention his money.

So Salman The Magnificent continued his conquests all over the globe, amassing a veritable harem of dusky lovelies, and no longer spent his days toiling at his scrolls, so great was the prowess of this Passionate Potentate of the Pen.

©Translated from the Arabic by Lunchtime O'MarKhayyam

National Treasure Island



WORLD UPROAR FORCES SLAGG TO APOLOGISE

by Our Media Staff **Lunchtime O'Boyzone**

AN ARTICLE by Eye columnist Glenda Slagg on the subject of Seamus Gayfeller, a late member of the popular Dublin-based singing group Bogzone, has drawn over two million complaints to the Press Complaints Commission, the Race Relations Board and the UN Security Council.

A campaign on the social networking site Twitter called for Ms Slagg to be tried for war crimes and for the death penalty to be restored in this particular case.

Moir Means Worse

Faced with the threat of prosecution under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2008, Ms Slagg issued a clarification through her lawyers.

"OK, so I said he was a sleazy poof. Who cares? What sort of world are we living in where you can't call someone a sleazy poof?"

The paper's editor explained, "Ms Slagg is keen to make it clear that she deeply regrets any offence she may have caused to our advertisers who are threatening to cancel their contracts, and wishes to assure readers that her comments were not meant to be in any way homophobic."

GLENDA'S CONTROVERSIAL COLUMN LAST WEEK

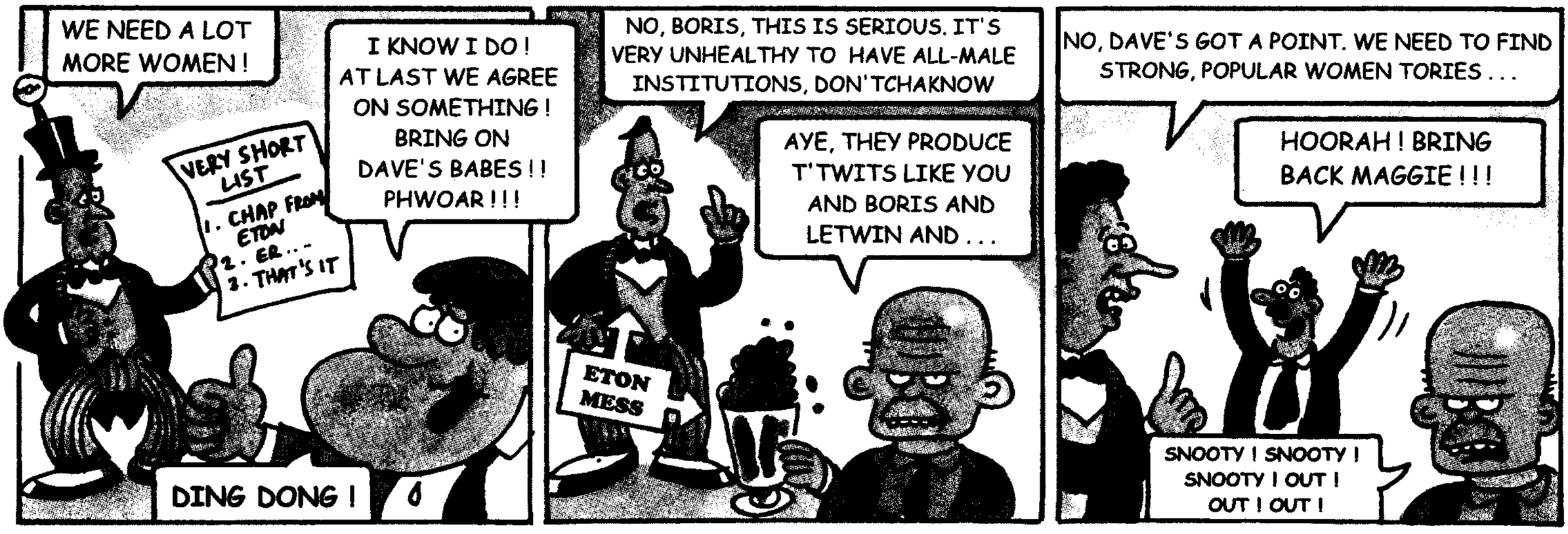
■ SEAMUS GAYFELLER!?!! Who did he think he was, a-mincin' and a-wincin', a preenin' and a queenin' with his boyfriend (sorry, Mr PC, 'civil partner'). No wonder the gay brigade all end up dead when they behave like Shameless (geddit?)

Did you want to kill Glenda when you read the article? Text now to Gagtheslaggdallymail.co.uk

GLENDA'S COLUMN TODAY

■ **SPARE A THOUGHT for poor Seamus Gayfeller, the gifted musician who sadly...** *(cont. p.94)*

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


WE NEED A LOT MORE WOMEN!
VERY SHORT LIST
1. CHAP FROM ETON
2. ER...
3. THAT'S IT
I KNOW I DO! AT LAST WE AGREE ON SOMETHING! BRING ON DAVE'S BABES!! PHWOAR!!!
DING DONG!
NO, BORIS, THIS IS SERIOUS. IT'S VERY UNHEALTHY TO HAVE ALL-MALE INSTITUTIONS, DON'TCHAKNOW
AYE, THEY PRODUCE T'TWITS LIKE YOU AND BORIS AND LETWIN AND . . .
ETON MESS
NO, DAVE'S GOT A POINT. WE NEED TO FIND STRONG, POPULAR WOMEN TORIES . . .
HOORAH! BRING BACK MAGGIE!!!
SNOOTY! SNOOTY! SNOOTY! OUT! OUT! OUT!

SINGER MANAGES TO SING SONG

by Our Showbiz Staff

LAST NIGHT a singer who is famous for being in a singing group wowed the nation by nearly singing a song on live television. Said a singing expert, "The singer only mimed 99% of the song which is incredible. Normally singers mime the whole song."

The singer who judges other singers singing live said, "I am lost for words – but here is a recording of me talking earlier."

Afghan Election Latest

MUGABE WINS SHOCK

IN A surprise second ballot the Afghan elections were won by President Robert Mugabe, who secured 99% of the vote.

Said a delighted Mr Mugabe, "The opposition parties led by Mr Berlusconi only got 98% of the vote thus proving the power of the ballot box – especially when you steal it and hit people over the head with it."

A dejected Mr Hamid Karzai, who only secured a desultory 93% of the vote, said that he was disappointed but surprised and delighted to have won *Strictly Come Dancing* instead. "There must have been a mix up with the votes," he said, "but it's been a remarkable journey and I am living the dream."

Notes&queries

What is 'string theory'?

(Mrs Stephanie Hawking, Cambridge)

● "String theory" was first developed in the 1930s at Battenburg University by Professor Hans Twining, who argued that the entire universe was made, not from atoms as had been previously thought, but from particles of string. His famous paper "Das Univers von Stringpartikel Gemacht" (1933) was supressed by Hitler as a "Jewish Conspiracy". The theory was revived in the 1980s by a team of mathematicians at Berkeley, California, led by Professor Melvin R. Ropey. It was briefly known as "Ropey Theory" before reverting to its original title as "String Theory" and is now generally accepted as the most plausible explanation for the structure and nature of the universe.
Rev. A.K.H. Reef-Knot

What is the origin of the now popular expression "dissing"?

● Contrary to the explanation offered by Sir Vidia Naipaul, the word is not a patois abbreviation for the term "disrespecting". In fact, it goes back to the 17th Century and was derived from the Norfolk market town of Diss, the inhabitants of which were well known for their puritanical zealotry. Outsiders who came to the town and behaved "immodestly or intemperately" were subjected to long moral lectures and were even put in the stocks. This was known as being given "a good Dissing" (as was recorded by Daniel Defoe in his celebrated *Tour of the British Isles*).
Dr Horace Saumarez-Smith, archivist of the Norfolk Museum of the Rural Environment, Diss

Is it true that ants can't walk backwards?

● Not this old chestnut again! I thought we'd laid this to rest decades ago. How many more times do I have to point out what should be obvious to anyone who has studied ant behaviour – that these insects only walk forwards? The still unfortunately widespread misconception that ants can "retro-ambulate" comes from a celebrated April Fool hoax perpetrated by the BBC's Natural History Unit in 1957, which depended on the simple trick of reversing the film. I hope that I will not have to write again on this subject, since I see from my files that I have already done so 67 times and I have many better things to do with my time.
Cedric Formica-Smith, Beddington

Answers please to the following:

Did Leonardo invent the internet? Do fish cause global warming? Is Sir David Frost still alive?

Great Scottish Clans No. 94

The McFuggers of McFugger

ONE OF the oldest and noblest of the Scottish clans, the McFuggers claim direct descent from the great Celtic Pharaoh Rameses II.

From ancient times, the McFuggers were feared and loathed as they went on the rampage, coming down from the Highlands selling carpets, grand pianos and luxury items of food.

Today the clan is headed by President Mohamed al-Fugger Of That Kilt, who wants Scotland to be independent under his leadership and who has waged a one-man war on the hated English Royal Family, and in particular the Duke of Edinburgh, who he describes as a "Fugging Sassenach murderer who should be run through with a fuggin' claymore."

With his famous battle-cry of "Och aye the noo passport!",

McFugger remains a fearsome figure as he stalks through Harrods looking for young women to *(Is this right? Ed).*

Issued by the Scottish Tourist Office

SPOT THE BALLS

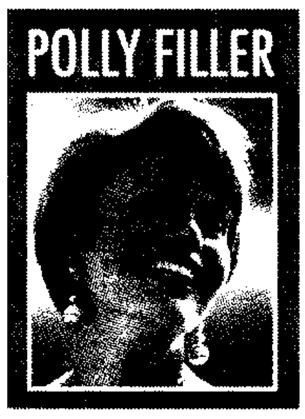
"I'm not a bully... **...and anyone who says I am...** **...is going to get their head kicked in"**

That Honorary Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS JACOBUS DEE COMICUS MISERABILIS ET NOVUS HOSTUS 'REGRETTO, NON HABEO CLUEDO!' IN RADIO IV QUONDAM ALCOHOLICUS NON-EMPLOYMENS IN DEPRESSIONE ET CETERA ET CETERA SED NUNC FAMOSISSIMA PER COMEDIA ERECTA E.G. 'VIVENS AB APPOLLO' QUOQUE SCRIPTIT LIBER BIOGRAPHIENS CELEBRITATIO PER FESTIVALE CHRISTUS NATUS APPELATUS "GRATI PER NULLI" (REDUCTIO AB £VII.IC IN OMNIA TABERNA BONA) GAUDETE (SED NON JACOBUS QUIS NON RIDIT SEMPER)! GEDDIT? LAUDAMUS DEE-O ! GEDDIT ?

© The University of Winchester (formerly King Alfred's Catering College), Hants.

POLLY FILLER



I'M in full agreement with the educational experts who say it's absurd that children in Britain start school at the age of four! It's insane! Mad! Plain old-fashioned bonkers! They should start school at the age of two! If not earlier!

What's even more crackers is the nutty professor's recommendation that kids start school at six! That's S-I-X! Can you believe it?

Six in the morning maybe – but six years old? Every mother's nightmare!

Clearly, the loony who thought up this hare-brained scheme is a man – because it's nothing less than an attack on working women.

By which I mean, of course, the au pair (Pau Pah from riot-torn Xing Jiang, since you ask!).

How on earth is the silly girl going to combine childcare, laundry, cleaning, gardening, cooking and supermarket shopping (not to mention renewing the TV licence and taking the car for its MOT) with having an energetic toddler under her feet all day? Impossible!

IT's disgraceful and unfair. Looking after a gifted infant like Charlie is a full-time job and if Pau Pah has to supervise him walking the hamster – and it's not as though she'll have any help from the Useless Simon who is too busy playing Poker On-line in the hope of virtually meeting Victoria Coren... how sad is that Simon? It's never going to happen, do you hear? Never!... anyway, where was I?

Oh yes, school starting age. If Professor Egghead-Interfering-Busybody wants Charlie to wait until he's six before he goes to school then perhaps he would like to come round Chez Filler and spend his empty day taking Charlie to see "Up" for the seventh time!! Because some of us women have got jobs to do (get on with the ironing, Pau Pah!) and others have got columns to write!!

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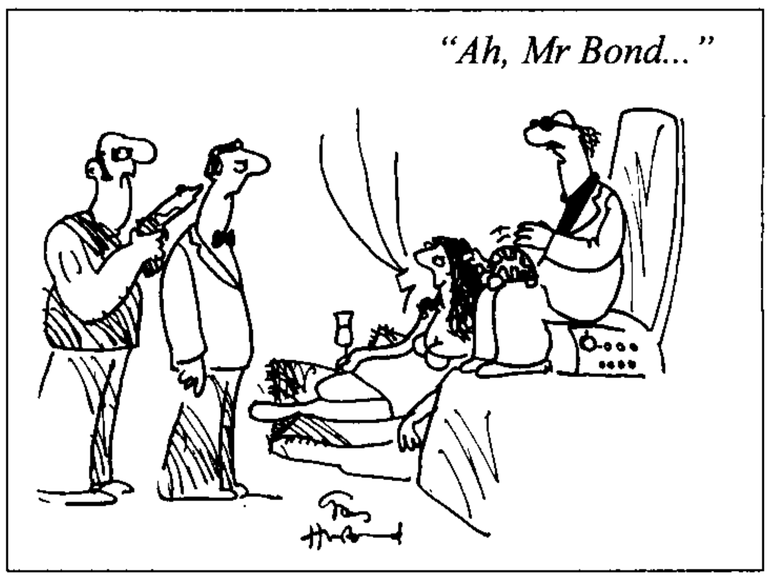


From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

90th Anniversary of first Remembrance Day

gobless them dead solder's ☺ but stil we send are armforce's to afganstan ☹ on poppy day may-be are boy's culd stop fight-ing poppy farmer's and give out special poppy's with a line a-cross them like no smoke-ing signes? to razor wareness for drug's? – ***Binny***

Everyone says "bring them home", but when they come home they're not even allowed in pubs. If they can't fight abroad and they can't fight here, then where are they supposed to fight? No wonder so many end up in prison – it's the only place they can let off steam without somebody complaining. – ***Old_Contemptible***

I've been thinking about the drunken student urinating on the war memorial. What is needed is a measured response: WE ARE NOT SAVAGES. On the Day of Remembrance, representatives of each service should urinate on memorials with dignified discipline and make the yobs lick them clean. – ***Public_Spirited_Citizen***

The use of Churchill's wartime picture by the so-called British National Party is a travesty. Winston might not have been the greatest admirer of our Hebraic friends, but he had no desire to see them slaughtered. Such crassness appalled all civilised Britons. – ***Brown_out***

on the suns websight theres a video of hero's like falkland's heroe simon westlife ☹ they say our boy's hate nick puffin an the B and P party ☺ but y is sas heroe andy mcnab warin a burka? – ***Queen_of_Herts***

proud of you guys ☹ re SAS HERO ANDY MCNAB with all due respect to myself i read all his book's and inter-view's and he is NOT wearing a berka its just he cant show his hole face for security reason's sorry i cant reveal them SAS SECRET'S ☺ i was invilid-ed out and now i always wear a balaclaver for security ☺ ANDY YOUR A LEGEND – ***Bravo_2_Zero***

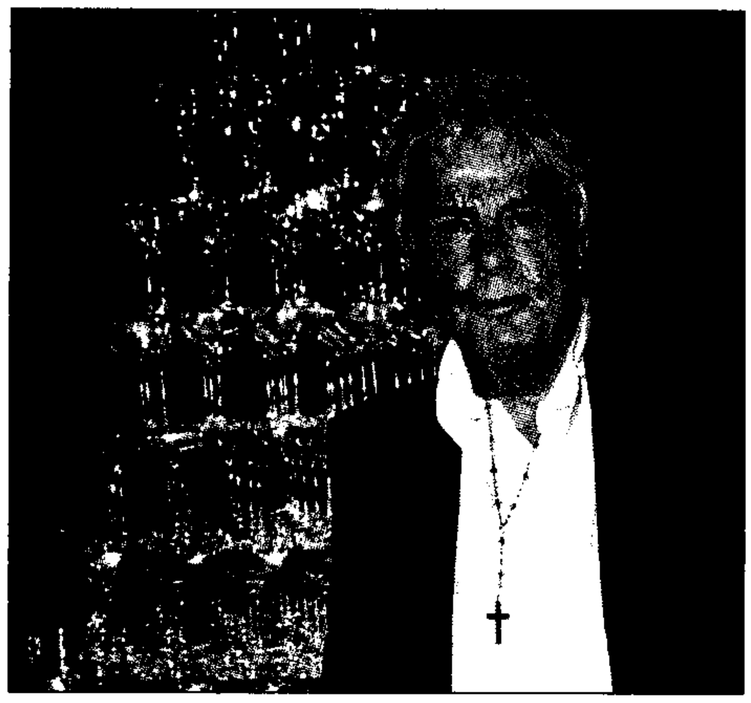
bravozorro r u the postie whu got compo for gettin hurt by a gate? ☺ i seen u in ur mask in west hill post office gettin ur benifit's lol! – ***Cherry_boy***

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Everyone used to slag off Damien because he didn't produce his own work...
Now it's because he does!
HIRST'S HUBRIS DARES TO HANG HIS PAINTINGS NEXT TO OLD MASTERS.
DAMIEN'S DIRE DAUBS DREARILY DULL.
YAWNS OUR ART CRITIC
WORLD'S RICHEST ARTIST CRAP PAINTER SHOCK!

DIARY



NICKY HASLAM

Sarah Brown is common, or else why would she live in Downing Street, which is on the wrong side of Whitehall, not that there's really a right side. And Big Ben is horribly common. So showy. If you're THAT big, why boast about it?

Opal Fruits never used to be common, in fact they were extremely un-common, particularly the lemon flavours. Rodolphe von Hofmannstahal used to serve Lemon Opal Fruits at his house in Gstaad. That was before Gstaad became common.

But then Opal Fruits were rechristened "Starburst". They became common overnight. Now they are totally beyond the pale. I used to see a lot of Vanessa Opal in the Sixties, of course: she was terrific pals with Jimmy and Claudia Malteser. When Claudia was away, Jimmy used to melt in my hands, but that's another story.

Gerry Adams is common, with that simply ghastly beard of his. But Ian Paisley is a poppet. One wants to put him in one's pocket and take him home, then have him bellow sweet nothings in one's ear! Heaven! I wonder if a very, very bold check tweed Biligorri suit might suit him? I saw Paisley (such a pretty name) last night on *Newsnight* arguing the toss with Jemima Paxman. Halfway through the interview, he turned to the camera and winked at me. And him a Reverend! Saucy boy.

Gentlemen's Relish is common. Anything with anchovy is desperately common. Bronchitis is common, and so is Arthritis. Anything ending in "tis", in fact, except for clematis. Sore Throats are dreadfully common. Athlete's Foot is not common. In fact, it's gloriously *distingué*. I'm having some artificial fungus painted on to my left foot tomorrow, in beautiful pinks and violets.

All television is common. The only newscaster who isn't common is Peter Sissons, who's an absolute dreamboat. Peter and I were very intimate one summer, long ago. He used to look so pretty in his two-piece grey suit. Every night, I'd ask him to read the news to me at a little desk at the foot of the bed, and always with that simply wonderful I'm-being-oh-so-serious face on. And then right at the end, he'd click his pen in that divine way he had, and shuffle those papers with his big strong newsreadery hands of his. I was agog.

Namedropping is dreadfully common, or so Jackie Kennedy told me over luncheon with Greta Garbo, Sandy Gall, Adam Faith and The Duchess of Abercorn.

Contrary to popular belief, The Royal Family aren't entirely common. Princess Anne is, needless to say, and so is Prince Andrew, but Prince Edward is most definitely not common – how could anyone be accused of being common who is so ready to dress up as Carmen Miranda? Princess Michael of Kent told me that Diana Cooper once spotted Queen Elizabeth II blowing her nose on her sleeve when no-one was looking and wasn't that common? I said, not at all, Marie-Christine, what's really common is using a handkerchief. The last time I saw her, she was wiping her nose ostentatiously on her sleeve even though friends informed me she most definitely didn't have a cold.

The first time I met The Duke of Edinburgh he was wearing a leather posing pouch. Our eyes met and in that moment I thought to myself "This is it!" Then he swept me away in that funny little horse-drawn carriage of his. He was all stirrups and whips. Talk about Bucking Bronco!

Pork tenderloin is common, and so is any pasta though, paradoxically, not spaghetti. Francis Bacon is common. Everyone has to have one of those screaming Popes – such a bore. The only Pope who wasn't common was Pope Paul V1. I never saw him screaming, not even when I pinched his BTM. He always looked quite wonderful in emerald green, which set off that lovely neck of his. He was so petite, but marvellously well-proportioned. With the incense billowing everywhere, he reminded me of the young Rudolf Valentino.

Walking down Madison Avenue with Nin Ryan, the daughter of Otto Kahn to whom my uncle Cecil Ponsonby had been sports tutor, I ran into the neat little figure of Franco Zeffirelli, whom I had talked to at one of Biddy Baxter's dinners on Capri. I told him that the films of Ingmar Bergman were common, and he reluctantly agreed. "The figure of death is unforgivably common," I explained. "And the only game more common than chess is Scrabble." The most common square in Scrabble is the Double Letter Score. I might have added that by far the most common of all the properties on the Monopoly board is Water Works, but by that time he had run off to have dinner with Gee Marvel, the former wife of Sonny Whitney, whose black velvet drawing room I perked up with cyclamen pink banquettes a couple of years ago.

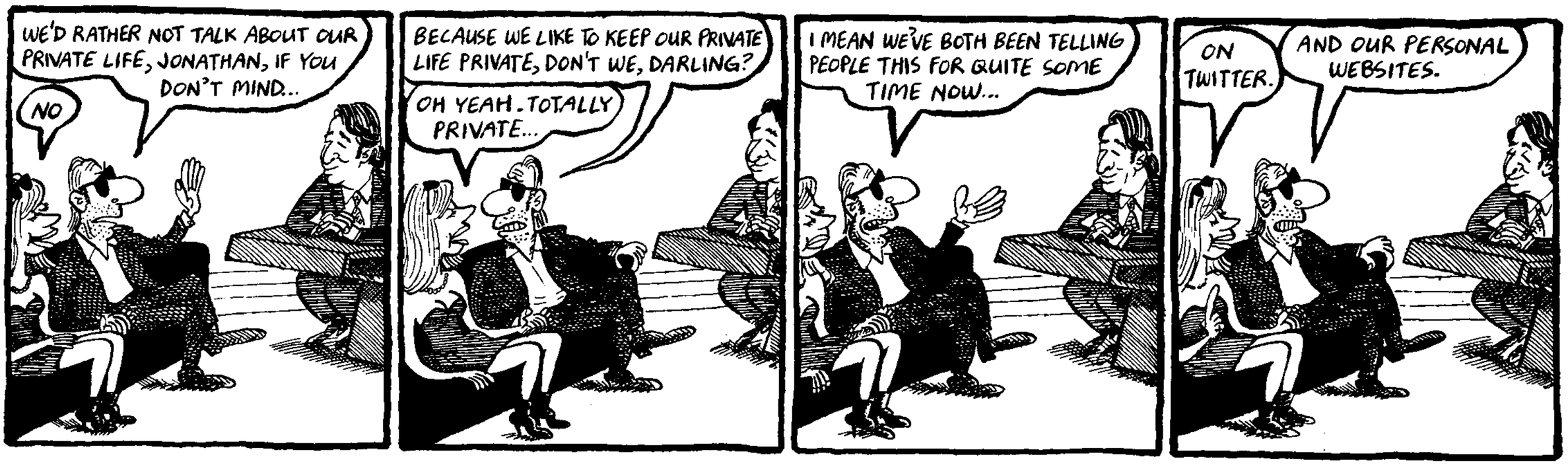
Cyclamen pink banquettes are fearfully common these days. Quite the opposite three years ago, but then Gee Marvel, the former wife of Sonny Whitney, went and had them put in, and, quite understandably, the world held up its hands aghast and we all sped swiftly on.

Pugs are common, and so are labradors, King Charles spaniels, terriers and dalmatians. When I last met Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother she mischievously whispered to me that she thought corgis were awfully common. She giggled uproariously when I promised not to pass it on. I thought it best not to mention that giggling uproariously was even more common. When she died, a quarter of a million people marched past her body. It's terribly common to allow a quarter of a million to march past your body. Chairman Mao did the same, which proves my point. After umpteen years, Mao really should have done something about that grubby little blue romper-suit. He might have looked fabulous in tartan, but, being common, he lacked the imagination.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


WE'D RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT OUR PRIVATE LIFE, JONATHAN, IF YOU DON'T MIND..
NO
BECAUSE WE LIKE TO KEEP OUR PRIVATE LIFE PRIVATE, DON'T WE, DARLING?
OH YEAH. TOTALLY PRIVATE...
I MEAN WE'VE BOTH BEEN TELLING PEOPLE THIS FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW...
ON TWITTER.
AND OUR PERSONAL WEBSITES.

Literary Review

Spook in the wheel

The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5

Christopher Andrew

(Allen Lane, £30)

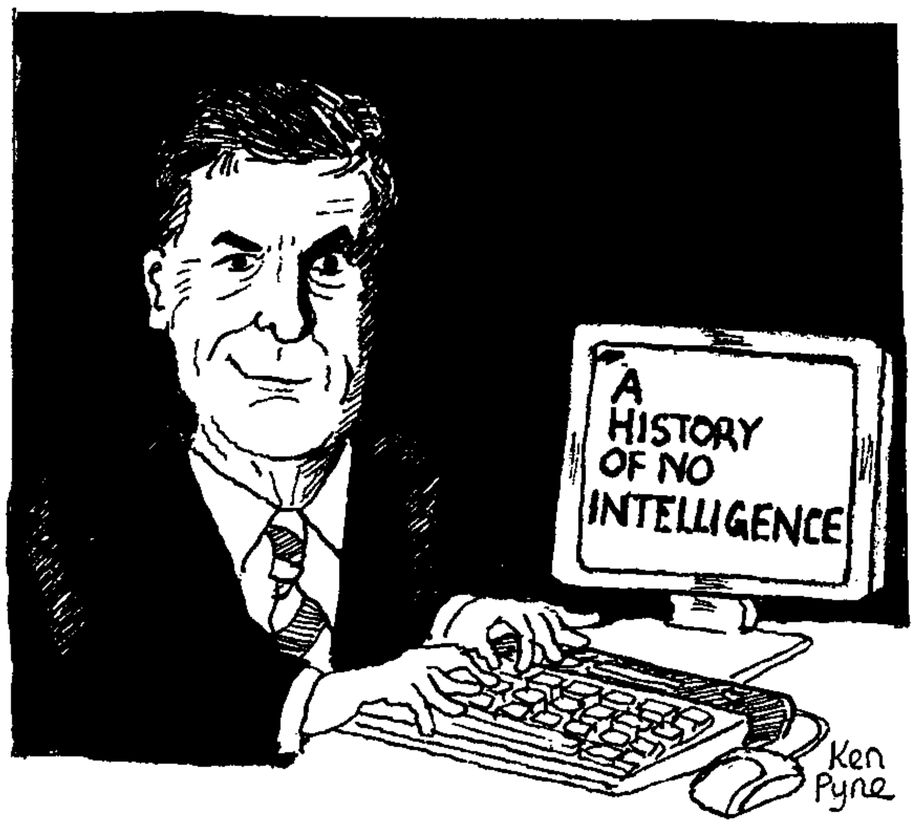
CRITICAL praise falls like confetti upon Professor Christopher Andrew's centenary history of MI5 – and, given the identity of the critics, it's no wonder.

Allegations that MI5 officers may have sometimes overstepped the mark are "convincingly debunked", says the *FT* reviewer, one Dame Stella Rimington, former DG of the service. "Definitive and fascinating," raves the *Spectator*'s "Alan Judd" – aka Alan Petty, a veteran MI6 spook and tireless cheerleader for the intelligence services. "Magisterial," echoes the *Sunday Telegraph*'s Oleg Gordievsky, whose own books on the KGB were co-written with Christopher Andrew. Robert McCrum of the *Observer*, who studied under Andrew at Cambridge, congratulates his old teacher on an "authoritative" and "scholarly" history.

Shome mishtake, shurely? Genuine works of historical scholarship have source-notes so that other scholars – or even ordinary readers – can seek out the original reference and verify it. That's what destroyed David Irving in his libel action against Deborah Lipstadt: the Cambridge historian Richard Evans looked up the sources cited by Irving and found he had misrepresented them. No such exercise is possible with this 1,000-page "authorised history", since the vast majority of Andrew's source-notes consist of a worthless three-word formula: "Security Service Archives."

We have been here before. Ten years ago, with the approval of MI6 and the government, Christopher Andrew published a book based on the thousands of Russian files given to British intelligence by a defecting KGB archivist, Vasili Mitrokhin. Asked by a Labour MP why it was acceptable for an academic to have access to the archive when MPs were forbidden to see it, Jack Straw replied that the documents were "of great sensitivity" and should be put in the public domain "by way of proper historical analysis". Professor Andrew, it seemed, was now the intelligence agencies' official digestive system, gorging himself on secret papers but excreting only those that weren't too embarrassingly whiffy.

And what a gut-busting feast he has had this time! In his preface, Andrew boasts of getting "virtually unrestricted access" to the files accumulated by MI5 over the past century, including "almost 400,000 paper files... many of them multi-volume". Not even the hungriest historian can consume that much on his own: he was assisted by a research team at MI5 headquarters "composed of one current and two retired members of the Security Service (who cannot, alas, be named)".



Since the rest of us aren't allowed to read these files, we have to take it on trust that Andrew and his anonymous little helpers at Thames House have digested them thoroughly. "I was given an assurance at the outset (which has been fully honoured) that no attempt would be made to change any of the judgments I arrived at," he writes. But why would MI5 wish to challenge judgments that are so ceaselessly flattering? The spooks knew in advance they could rely on him to give them the benefit of every doubt.

Take the "Wilson plot". Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* may be an unreliable source, but there's plenty of other evidence that some MI5 officers believed Harold Wilson to be a KGB agent – as did James Jesus Angleton, head of counter-subversion at the CIA. Names and details can be found in *The Wilson Plot* by David Leigh and in *Smear!*, a compendious account of Wilson's dealings with the secret state written by Robin Ramsay and Stephen Dorril. Lord Hunt, the former cabinet secretary, said there was "absolutely no doubt" that malcontents in the security service tried to undermine Wilson.

You'd never guess any of this from Andrew's account, which dismisses the "plot" as a fantasy that existed only in the mind of Peter Wright. There's no mention of Lord Hunt's admission, and no reference to either *The Wilson Plot* or *Smear!* in the bibliography. Andrew's heroic efforts on MI5's behalf are, however, ultimately self-defeating. By blaming all the Wilson conspiracy theories on the "paranoid", "unscrupulous" and "dishonest" Peter Wright, he prompts the question: how did such a maniac ever come to be employed by the service and rise to the rank of assistant director?

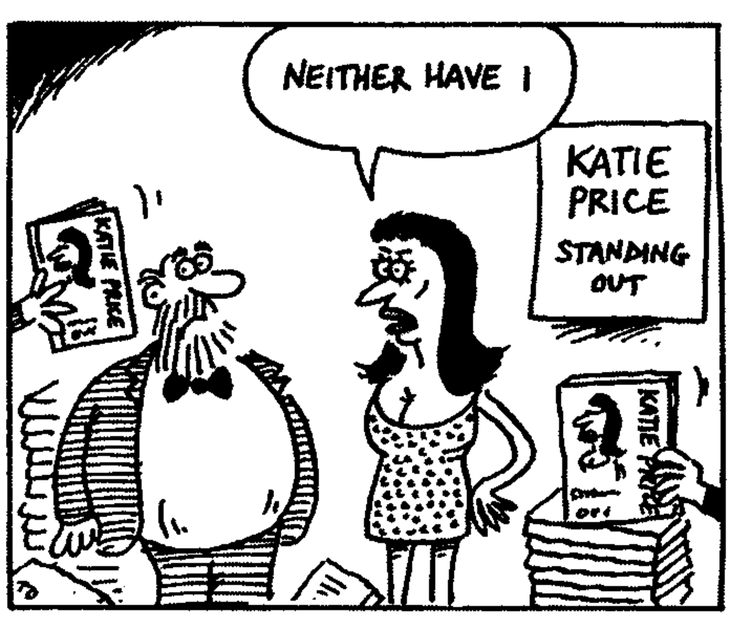
The professor's carefree canter through the "Death on the Rock" story – a scant six pages for one of MI5's most controversial operations since the war – has similarly unintended consequences. Andrew denies that the three IRA members gunned down in Gibraltar were victims of a "shoot to kill" policy. Yet they were undoubtedly killed, despite being unarmed at the time, and despite the fact that MI5 had been watching their every move since they arrived on the Rock. How could the spooks not know that it was safe to arrest them rather than open fire? "The fact that they were unarmed," Andrew explains, "was not discovered until after they had been shot." Doesn't this make one wonder about the infallibility of MI5's surveillance?

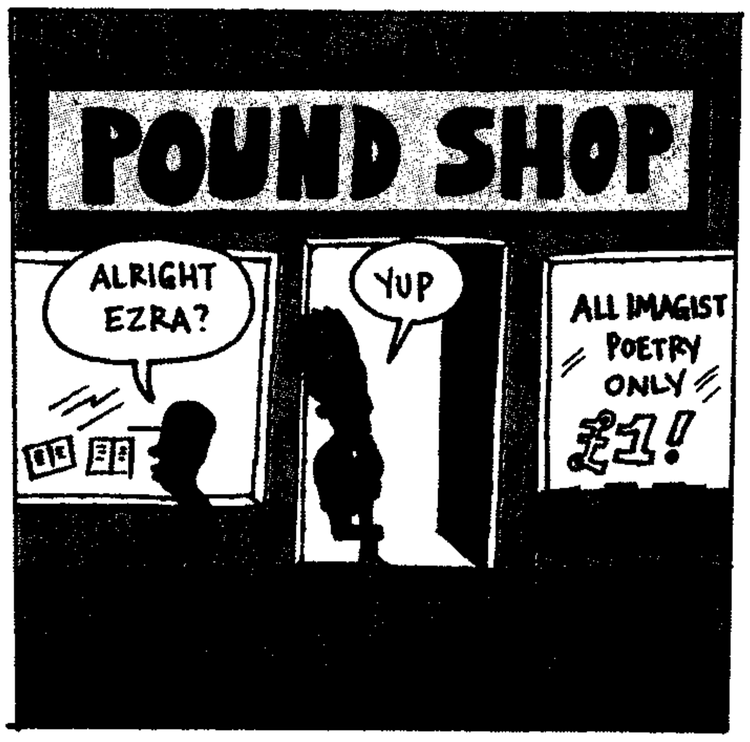
Andrew's jaunty, celebratory tone is continually at odds with the evidence, however hard he tries to sweeten it. One "surveillance photo" from the 1940s shows John Gollan, a leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, leaving a meeting of the party's central committee. While MI5 was pointlessly proving that a prominent CP member was indeed attending CP meetings it quite failed to notice that other, more significant figures – Philby, Burgess, Maclean, Blunt, Cairncross – were also working for Moscow. There was, Andrew shrugs, "not much it could have done" to stop them penetrating the corridors of power. "Anthony Blunt was popular with staff at all levels of the security service... Kim Philby too successfully ingratiated himself with MI5 [with] his considerable personal charm." Who'd have guessed that double agents might use such underhand methods?

Not MI5, clearly. For an outfit dedicated to counter-espionage and counter-subversion it seems remarkably ignorant of what a spy or a subversive looks like. In the early 1980s it targeted the CND leaders Monsignor Bruce Kent and Joan Ruddock, though it was blindingly obvious that neither was a Communist agent, but overlooked the increasingly bizarre and drunken behaviour of its own officer Michael Bettaney, who was pushing secret documents through the letter-box of Arkady Guk, the KGB resident in London. It was only because MI6 happened to have a double-agent in the KGB residency, Oleg Gordievsky, that Bettaney was eventually fingered.

The chronicle of cluelessness continues into the present era. "Suggestions in the press of a world-wide Islamic extremist network poised to launch terrorist attacks against the West are greatly exaggerated," the service reassured the heads of special branches in December 1995. "The contact between Islamic extremists in various countries appears to be largely opportunistic at present and seems unlikely to result in the emergence of a potent transnational force." What of the man who was described by the media as the mastermind of this transnational force? MI5 had no intelligence that Osama bin Laden was a terrorist, and "should bin Laden come to the UK we do not believe he would instigate acts of terrorism here or use Britain as a base for organising terrorism". Stella Rimington had never even heard the name al Qaeda until March 1996, on a visit to America, when she was "taken aback" to find it listed as the first item on the agenda of her meeting with the US national security adviser.

It is sometimes said that intelligence agencies would be better informed if they spent less time playing with invisible ink and more time reading the newspapers. The same applies to intelligence historians, to judge by Andrew's assertion that by December 2001 "the land forces of the US-led coalition had defeated the Taliban". If he ever takes a break from feasting on secret files and turns on a news bulletin, he's in for a big surprise.





BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ "STOP spending your millions on this tripe!" Lynda La Plante urged publishers at last week's crime-writing awards ceremony, attacking the "dross" purveyed as written by "reality TV writers" and other celebrities such as first-time novelist Martine McCutcheon, who was present as a guest.

Her outburst is unlikely to have received much support at the sales-driven imprints she was appealing to, where commercial viability often relies on dross purportedly penned by celebs. Other editors dream of finding models, soap actresses and pop stars capable of reproducing the formula of Katie Price and Kerry Katona, where each ghost-written novel follows hard on the heels of the latest of a series of ghost-written memoirs.

If publishers find it hard to understand what the fuss is about, it may be because the practice of employing servants to perform writing chores is already so normal. Some of the big hopes for a hit this Christmas, and hence recipients of the biggest advances, are overtly by ghosts: they include sporting stars' autobiographies and the memoirs of Ozzy Osbourne and Ant and Dec. Rumour suggests many other books by the famous secretly involve ghosts or editors in an equal or leading role.

There's also the assembly-line approach pioneered by Tom Clancy and developed by James Patterson, who is capable of writing his thrillers unaided but maintains his phenomenal productivity (a recent $150m US deal was for 17 novels produced by 2012) by recruiting co-authors who would seem to do most of the work. Without Patterson's half-dozen novels per year, Random House UK could not hope to compete against the rival Hachette empire.

Publishers are now so addicted to outsourcing the tiresome business of putting words on a page that appealing to them is futile. But there are hints of a punter revolt. Reader fatigue appears to be shrinking the sales of Price and Katona's latest efforts, and they have no obvious successors.

Achieving a No 1 bestseller continues to elude Patterson, with readers preferring authors who may be trashy too (Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer, Stieg Larsson) but at least hand-craft their novels. The most successful recent celebrity memoirs, such as Peter Kay's, have been by writer-performers telling their own story engagingly, not by the most famous names grumpily granting a ghost interviews or handing over a dictaphone.

■ BOOKSHOP crime shelves are full of novels by women that specialise in disgusting scenes.

Jessica Mann has complained about the phenomenon, echoing earlier concerns voiced by Ian Rankin, in giving up reviewing crime fiction for the *Literary Review*. The authors in question, meanwhile, look suspiciously like a cosy sisterhood, cheering each other on to new extremes.

Take *Evil at Heart*, Chelsea Cain's recently published third novel involving Gretchen Lowell, a serial killer who inflicts new atrocities on her victims – usually internal organ removal, but on this occasion cutting out their eyeballs – each time she resurfaces. The book carries endorsements from two of the longer-established writers associated with the vogue for ultra-violence: Tess Gerritsen hails the return of "what may be the creepiest serial killer ever created", while Val McDermid applauds it as "dark, distressing and disturbing... Just pray you never meet Gretchen". It's not just the horror scenes that are creepy...

■ WATERSTONE'S has finally admitted defeat in the face of problems with its brand spanking new centralised and outsourced "Hub" supply system and told staff to place customer orders with former distributor Gardners if their computers tell them the title is not "available within 48 hours".

This, as the last two editions of the *Eye* have revealed, is Hubspeak for "a few weeks, if you're lucky." In another victory for hi-tech, these orders cannot be recorded on the computer system but have to be, er, written down on a bit of paper instead.

Just the moment for an exciting push by the Waterstone's marketing department: "BEAT THE STRIKE" shrieked an email delivered to customers of the chain's website last week. "Simply select your local Waterstone's as your preferred delivery address when you next make a purchase and you'll have your order delivered FREE to your local store. We use our own delivery network to ensure 'deliver to store' orders are shipped swiftly to our branches." Hubtastic!

'Bookworm'

LIBRARY NEWS

■ CULTURE minister Margaret Hodge clearly has her finger on the pulse of the UK's public libraries to judge by her performance at the Public Library Association conference in Bristol.

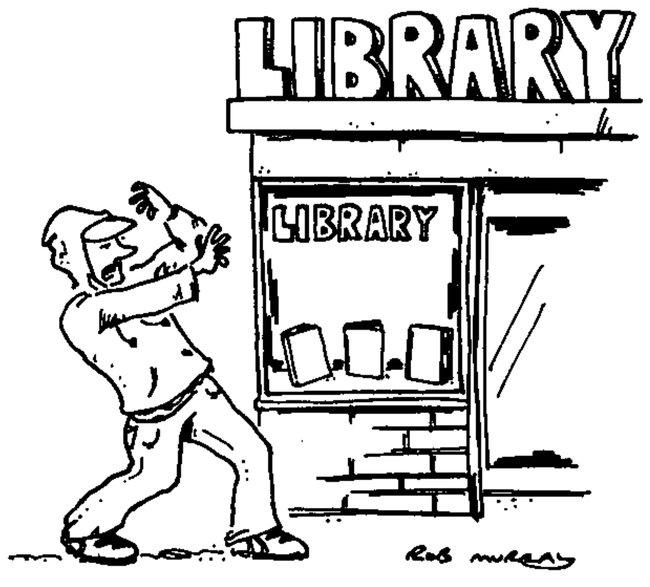
She outlined her bright new ideas to pep up the library services of the future, claiming to be pushing innovative thinking to the boundaries. Librarians would beg to differ.

"Which of you," she asked, "is going to be the first to provide... libraries in shopping centres or at railway stations" (er, in Merton library books were placed at Raynes Park Station, a local pub and a church back in 2004); "a deal with a Starbucks or a Costa..." (there's already a coffee shop in every library in Hillingdon); "a loyalty card scheme..." (Lambeth and Southwark have loyalty cards offering borrowers free DVD borrowing); "other forms of reading in London libraries to attract young males – comics, manga etc..." (is there any London library that *doesn't* now stock comics and manga?)

■ BOOKS are sooo boring. If only libraries could do without them entirely. That seems to be the thinking behind Skidrow-on-Sea's plan to make its trendy, book-lite Jubilee Library even more "socially inclusive" by wheeling the shelves out of the way so the building can be rented out for "prestigious" social events.

The writer and library campaigner Christopher Hawtree turned up at a Brighton 'n' Hove council meeting the other day to ask a public question, *viz* why do Skidrow's libraries no longer have any dedicated music librarians? He cited the fine example of Westminster city council's music library – from which authority Skidrow recently headhunted its new chief exec.

Alas, the mild-mannered Hawtree's inquiry seemed to upset choleric Tory "culture" councillor David Smith. He declared that he would like to challenge Hawtree to a duel, adding boastfully that he would certainly win such a contest.



"Whoa! Too much information"

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, PT 94

Notwithstanding

Louis de Bernières

Miss Abigail Tweely and Miss Muriel Arch sat in the drawing-room of Honeysuckle Cottage eating digestive biscuits and drinking cups of strong bohea. They were the village of Whimsy-on-the-Water's oldest inhabitants. Outside the whirr of the developers' pneumatic drills could be heard tearing up the previously unspoilt meadow.

"I would have offered you cake, Muriel," Miss Tweely now said, "only Mr Bunn the baker has had to close his shop."

"Poor Mr Bunn," Miss Arch sighed. "All to do with the new Waitrose at Nether Gussett, I suppose. Do you know, my dear, I saw a ghost yesterday?"

"Not again! Was it the drowned parlour-maid from Crashing Grange, or the nun who was blown away in a gale – a story, by the way, that I never in the least believed?"

A low droning noise from across the hill now informed them that work on the new motorway had recommenced.

"However picturesque our lives here, Abigail, it is a great mistake to sentimentalise the countryside."

"Do I not know it, Muriel? Only the other day, poor Farmer Wazzock was disembowelled by his own gardening fork. But does it not alarm you, our being so figurative?"

"I cannot see," Miss Arch remarked, eyeing the tractor that was digging up the road outside, and the copy of the *Daily Telegraph* whose headline read *Thatcher's Boom: Yuppies buy up old country properties; rural life changing*, "that I am in the least figurative. What I resent" – she paused to shake the paw of her pet badger, Boffles, who now stole into the room – "is the determinism."

"Determinism, Muriel?" A shadow crept across Miss Tweely's pale, aristocratic face.

"Precisely. The fact, for example, that we all know you are shortly to die a horrible and suitably emblematic death... Abigail?"

But Miss Tweely had already slipped upon the letter from Messrs Shark & Vulture offering to buy Honeysuckle Cottage, fallen full-length into the fire, and been burnt alive. Miss Arch shook her head.

Cont p. 94.

Pseuds Corner

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, and often is his gold complexion dimm'd; and every fair from fair sometime declines. Shakespeare was not thinking about the shipping industry when he penned these lines, but shipping today has reason to reflect on the more prosaic truth behind the words… [*continues*]

From 'The Bottom Line', published by Moore, Stephens & Co. Chartered Accountants

Even Ilona's asshole has been puckered for the camera; it gives us a knowing wink, demanding our complicity.

ADRIAN SEARLE on the Jeff Koons exhibition, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Alex Jones, Peter Barnes

£10 paid for all entries

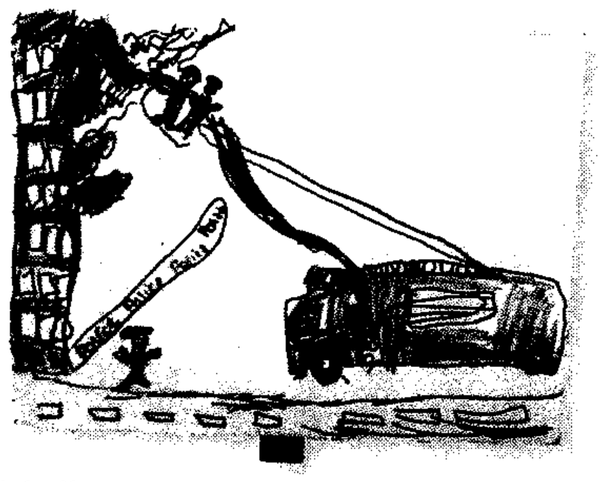
IN THE BACK

LAKANAL HOUSE FIRE

Death trap

THE Lakanal House fire, which took the lives of six women and children in Camberbell, south London, in July should never have been so deadly.

Fires had started in the block before, prompting questions about the fire risk posed by the 12-storey block. But at 4.10pm on Friday 3 July, a specific set of errors and oversights, some 20 years in the making, aligned to bring about the tragedy.



The progress of the fire itself was unusual, spreading from a flat on the ninth floor, where a faulty television had caught fire, to the 11 floor, where smoke and flames killed fashion designer Catherine Hickman in Flat 79. Later the bodies of Dayana Francisquini, her children Thais and Felipe, Helen Udoaka and her baby Michelle were found huddled on the bathroom floor of Flat 81 next door. They had been asphyxiated by the smoke. The fire also spread to the fifth and seventh floors.

Within minutes of the first 999 call, the London Fire Brigade had set up an operational command centre on the seventh floor to combat the flames. Its initial advice to residents, according to witnesses, was to stay in their flats. When it became apparent that the fire was spreading to other floors, the command centre was ordered to retreat to the third floor to ensure that firefighters were not cut off. Meanwhile, the advice to stay put may have sealed the fate of the families sheltering in Flat 81. The block had only one central staircase and evacuation was not total.

It would appear that the fire, which was tackled by more than 100 firefighters, was not the one they expected to fight. Indeed, the brigade might reasonably have assumed that, in accordance with fire safety regulations, each flat in the block represented a "one hour fire compartment" which would isolate a fire. It is now clear Lakanal House enjoyed no such protection.

Nine years ago Southwark council's own building design service identified Lakanal House and 12 other buildings in the borough as being at "medium" fire spread risk. In particular, it was noted, "there is a risk of localised fire spread between wall panelled sections". Yet it appears that subsequent renovations did not address this.

The nature of that renovation work, and the circumstances in which it was carried out, are also significant. Sometime during the lifespan of the building, vents placed at the end of each corridor, designed to help smoke disperse, were replaced with solid windows. And two separate major alterations were undertaken which may have contributed to the blaze spreading.

The first, to replace the heating system in the 1980s, required the installation of overhead heating pipes, under which a wooden false ceiling was placed. These wooden ceilings in the corridors represented a clear breach of Section 20 of the London Building Act. Another programme of works, in February 2007, to replace the facade of the block, including windows, was paid for under Southwark's "Decent Homes" programme. Window frames, described by Southwark as "metal" almost certainly contained some element of PVC which residents saw buckling, melting, catching fire and eventually falling to the ground.

The question is why, while £3.5m was spent by Southwark on the regeneration of this and other blocks, was more attention not paid to their fire risks?

Many architects point to the 2005 Fire Regulations, the legislation which empowered local authorities to self-regulate, shifting the responsibility for undertaking risk-assessments away from fire officers. Following an investigation by the BBC it is clear that in hundreds of council properties across London, including Lakanal, this fire risk assessment had not been undertaken.

However, even if Southwark had wanted to conform to the legislation, it is possible its housing department was ill-equipped to do so, since it was judged to be "failing" in 2003. Following Lib Dem Nick Stanton's re-election as council leader in 2006, he appointed a Tory, Cllr Kim Humphreys, as cabinet member for housing. In the period immediately preceding the replacement of Lakanal's windows, Humphreys began a heavily marketed strategy called "100 Days Of Change", in which the housing department was merged with environment and many senior housing officers were made redundant, including former department head Keith Broxup. Last month Humphreys promised to reappoint a director of housing.

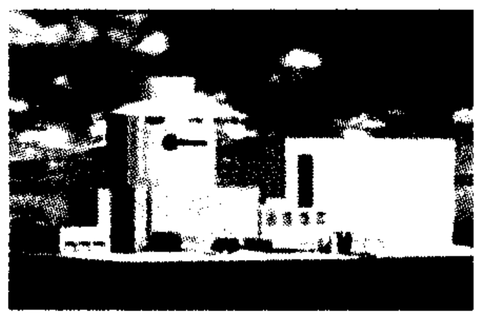
In the weeks following the tragedy, council leader Stanton declared that: "Central government funding restrictions severely affect the ability of councils like Southwark to build new homes in the quantities and to the timescales we would like." But the Lakanal fire was not the fault of HM Treasury, nor of the firefighters who fought so desperately to extinguish it. Until all formal investigations have been completed in 2010, it is impossible to say who or what was responsible. Meanwhile, Nick Stanton's administration has hired an expensive firm of lawyers called Burton Copeland – Britain's leading corporate manslaughter specialists.

NUCLEAR POWER

Design faults

ONE of the two nuclear reactor designs being proposed for Britain's' atomic renaissance is already in trouble with safety inspectors in the United States.

The UK's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is working on "generic" approvals for two reactor designs in an effort to speed up the country's nuclear "new build". Once the generic approvals are made, companies are free to build either design without further safety checks. But last month the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission cast a shadow over one of the designs by questioning the safety of the Westinghouse AP1000.



Westinghouse AP1000

US regulators rejected Westinghouse's design of the AP1000's shield, which protects the nuclear reactor from severe weather and provides a radiation barrier during normal operations. Plans for new nuclear plants are more advanced in the US than in the UK, and power firms there have already asked for licences to build 12 AP1000s across the southern states.

Meanwhile the other reactor under consideration for the UK, Areva's "European Pressurized Reactor" or EPR, is currently being built in Finland and France. In both countries the EPR is already running over budget and late because of quality issues concerning the reactor structure. Thus it is that both reactors lined up for Britain have problems. Any difficulty can be overcome by extra spending, but this makes promises that Britain will build a new generation of nuclear power stations without public subsidy look less convincing.

Government can of course introduce disguised subsidies by manipulating the "carbon tax" or by taking on more public liability for cleaning up after the power stations close. Helpfully, the nuclear industry has direct routes into Number 10 to press its case. The generic safety case for Areva's EPR reactor was jointly published with its partner, French power firm EDF, with one Andrew Brown acting as chief contact. Andrew is of course Gordon's brother, who when not promoting nuclear reactors arranges the cleaning of the prime minister's flat.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bum deal

THE sale by Britain's publicly-owned development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, of an emerging markets fund management company called Aureos Capital Ltd (ACL) – probably the only privatisation of a government-owned business ever to have occurred without parliament or public being told – was set up by CDC bosses without consulting the government, the *Eye* has learnt.

In August last year a put-out Department for International Development mandarin, Gavin McGillivray, wrote to CDC chief executive Richard Laing protesting that Aureos boss Sev Vettivetpillai had told him he was "at an advanced stage of negotiation" to buy out Aureos, a firm that places money from CDC and others in small companies in poor countries, without consulting DfID and thus in breach of a formal understanding between DfID and CDC.

An official in the government's shareholder executive was even more indignant, telling McGillivray: "Setting aside the issue of whether or not such a disposal makes sense from the perspective of the delivery of DfID's development objectives (on which you absolutely should have been consulted), there really should have been a more full conversation with you on the process being pursued, and how CDC have managed to assure themselves that the price being paid is a fair and reasonable one."

Referring to the controversial 2004 sale of CDC's main fund management arm, Actis, to CDC's then chief executive and partners (see *Eyes passim*), she continued: "I find it extraordinary, given the sensitivities round the Actis situation that the board haven't raised this with DfID formally."

CDC quickly sought to justify the plan. Although McGillivray initially replied that "we in DfID do not find the reasons you set out for CDC's sale of its Aureos shares fully persuasive", he eventually relented and the sale went through on 30 December. Nobody was keen to brag about the murky deal, however. DfID and CDC press chiefs agreed, in the words of CDC chairman Sir Malcolm Williamson, "a low level approach". This meant, er, keeping parliament and public in the dark.

So what of the privatized Aureos now, in which CDC sold its last 25.5 percent stake for a mere $78,000 (implying a $300,000 total value)? *Eye* 1240 reported that it, like Actis, has moved away from smaller investments – and last month it announced an investment in a private hospital in Costa Rica targeting "healthcare tourists from abroad".

Whether the sale price was fair is also a secret. CDC will not say how the value was reached, nor hand over the accounts of Mauritius-based ACL when it was publicly-owned to see how much profit it makes: a unique example of shareholders not being allowed to see the accounts of their own company. Among the limited freedom of information disclosures obtained by the *Eye*, there is only one clue. An otherwise blacked-out graph charting Aureos's annual profits has a scale rising to $2.5m – or roughly eight times the sale value. Looks like another bum deal for the taxpayer and the world's poor.

PUBS

Tied and emotional

LAST WEEK's ruling by the Office of Fair Trading that all was tickety-boo in the world of tied pubs was a blow to campaigners against the tie, but will not have surprised *Eye* readers.

Back in June we wrote that an inquiry by the OFT "sounds fine, until one realises that it is supported by the pubcos. They think an OFT inquiry would head off a tougher inquiry by the Competition Commission and rubber-stamp the existing set-up" (*Eye* 1238).

An *Eye* series earlier this year spelled out how the operation of the "tie" by pubcos such as Punch Taverns and Enterprise Inns – which force pub *tenants to buy their* beer at high prices at the same time as forcing up rents to the point that it is impossible for the tenants to make a living – had done so much damage to pubs. Unsustainable rents and high beer prices force tenants to pass such costs on to customers, who vote with their feet. Result: pubs close down – 40 a week at the latest count – and supermarkets' booze profits soar.

The OFT's ruling flies in the face of the conclusions of the Commons business and enterprise select committee (BEC), pub tenants' groups such as the Fair Pint campaign and the consumer group Camra. It is still open, however, as *Eye* 1238 pointed out, for business secretary Peter Mandelson to side-step the useless OFT and refer the matter to the Competition Commission anyway.

The OFT's ruling will have provided a rare moment of cheer for the two biggest, heavily-indebted pubcos, which between them own more than 15,000 tied pubs. Giles Thorley, chief executive of Punch, and Ted Tuppen of Enterprise, have both recently blamed their struggling tenants

for their own companies' dismal performances and gurgling share prices.

The City is not impressed. Andy Brough, a fund manager at Schroders, which owns around 3.4 per cent of Punch, last month described "the debt fuelled acquisition of tenanted pubs" as "an experiment that had not worked". He advised winding up the company and returning money to shareholders. Earlier this month Punch delivered results described as "dire" by sector analyst Jamie Rollo at Morgan Stanley. After writing off £663m from the value of its estate, Punch announced a loss of more than £400m for the year. The shares duly got a kicking.

Even former pubco pals are starting to desert the sinking ship. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), stung by condemnation from the Commons BEC earlier this year and exposure in *Eye* 1240 of the way it helps pubcos fix unfair rents, carried out a review of the valuation guidance it gives surveyors carrying out pub rent reviews. In a report just published, the RICS concludes that the game is up. Recognising a "perception of bias" that had "caused tension" in the pub sector, RICS' head of valuation, David Rusholme, announced sweeping reforms of the way pub rent reviews will be conducted in future. He made it clear that a "correct interpretation of RICS guidance" should leave the "tied tenant no worse off than if non-tied".

Beleaguered tenants have also taken heart from a high court judgment delivered on 7 September, known as the Brooker case. It centred on a lease renewal for a pub called the White Horse at Hambrook near Bristol. The pub has been run by affable father and son Charlie and Leslie Brooker for many years. The landlord is Unique Pub Properties Limited, a subsidiary of Enterprise Inns. In renewing the Brookers' lease Enterprise had been as greedy as usual, seeking a ridiculous £34,000 a year.

In a wide-ranging finding the judge, Iain Hughes QC, fixed the rent at just £18,000. He laid out a list of factors, previously denied by the pubcos, that pub tenants in general should be allowed to have taken into account at review. These included the smoking ban, negative media coverage of pubs and drinking, the number of pubs closing down, the economy in general, the difficulty in obtaining finance, declining beer sales and – importantly – the fact that a pubco lease was an onerous document that would result in the tenant making less money than if they were not tied.

Crucially, the judge also found that in the current economy the tenant should not have to pay more than 35 percent of the so-called "divisible balance" – a formula on which profits are calculated – to the landlord as rent.

Hughes rounded on Enterprise in his judgment and criticised it for suggesting that "the unemployed with their redundancy cheques might step in to fill the void [as tenants] created by the credit crunch". The judge described such comments as "surprising" and "falling below standards of objectivity". Meanwhile he found the White Horse's tenant, Leslie Brooker, to be a "cheerful and experienced pub tenant".

Who to find for? The spivs from Enterprise or the cheery landlord? Perhaps it wasn't such a tough judgment after all.

'Publican'

INSOLVENCY

Predatory PwC

THERE's no shortage of work right now for advisory accountants who help companies in financial difficulty. What a pity the bigger beancounting firms prefer not to help such clients get back on their feet but break their legs instead so they can pick up their usurious fees (more than £400 an hour for a partner) performing corporate surgery.

One company that hit choppy commercial waters last year was a Leeds motor sales business called Premier Motorauctions. The ten-year-old firm, owned and run by managing director Keith Elliott, boasted a turnover of £160m and annual profits of £2.5m, much of that derived from a contract with the DVLA to auction unusual number plates. The only hitch was an abortive attempt to sell the business for £38m, which incurred a £2.4m hit in 2007. Otherwise, said its bankers, it was "a great auction business".

To help it through its temporary difficulty the company, on its bank's advice, brought in a PricewaterhouseCoopers director, Irving Warnett, as a financial adviser. For an unspectacular but handy fee of £15,000, he duly negotiated the required extension of the company's bank loan with some standard securities for the bank. But as soon as this was agreed, the bank – for whom PwC was also acting as an adviser – wrote to Elliott seeking his agreement to administration of the company and the sale of the business "with vigour".

Elliott, fearing the loss of his business, refused to agree to PwC becoming administrator and set about looking for his own buyers, which he found three months later in Scottish Motor Auctions Group (SMAG). The deal would introduce all the funds the company needed and, crucially, would avoid an administration which, a SMAG director told Warnett, "would lead to an immediate and irrecoverable value destruction for all stakeholders in PML [Premier Motorauctions]". All that was needed was the consent of the bankers.

But that's when any hope for a good deal for all concerned evaporated. PwC for some reason failed to put the deal to the bankers, whose lawyers later confirmed that "the only offer from SMAG was to purchase the business and assets from administrators", leaving Premier no alternative but to agree to administration.

And who did the bankers give the subsequent administration contract, so far worth £1.2m in fees? To none other than PwC, of course, in the person of partner Ian Green. Only several weeks later did it emerge that Green was, ahem, Warnett's boss and that the PwC financial adviser had been working for the firm's insolvency section all along.

Even so, an administration of a company can only be justified if the business's assets aren't worth enough to pay its creditors. When Premier's assets came to be sold to SMAG for £7.2m, a £300,000 shortfall was achieved by selling its equipment at what looks like well below its true value. A batch of five-year old car transporters which were selling on the market for around £30,000 went for £3,000 a piece, for example. Other assets including valuable number plates were given away. In the process, creditors including small firms of builders, architects and, through HM Revenue & Customs, the taxpayer was short-changed.

PwC – sponsor of its profession's annual "transparency awards" – isn't too keen to talk about the case. Its press office refused to give a statement, Green didn't return calls and Warnett hung up on the *Eye's* hack when asked about his role!

Accountancy remains a self-regulated profession and although multiple conflicts of interest (in this case PwC acted as company adviser and bank adviser, then administrator) offend the Institute of Chartered Accountants' avowed ethics, action is rarely taken. So there is little reason for predatory firms not to stalk ailing businesses with a view to the multi-million pound fees that accompany administration contracts. Yet a government claiming to help business in the downturn shows no sign of addressing the scandal.

PS: Despite the big fees, PwC, who refused to talk to the *Eye*, can't manage to file Premier's accounts on time. The latest are already two months overdue.

JUST FANCY THAT!

GCHQ's formerly super-secret snooping project "Mastering the Internet" (MTI), whose existence was inadvertently revealed by a job advert this summer, is apparently pressing ahead, despite the fact that the government has still not published its response to the public consultation on its £2bn plans to improve internet monitoring.

All rather worrying for privacy campaigners, you'd think. But what's this? According to reports from IT news site The Register, GCHQ has called in HP Enterprise Services to help design and install the new computer systems. Readers may recall that HP Enterprise Services is the company formerly known as the *Eye*'s old friend, the disaster-prone EDS (*Eye* 1246)!

Based on past experience of EDS and UK government contracts, it could be a long while before the snooping begins.

SPENDING CUTS

Mr McKinsey

MANAGEMENT consultants are rubbing their hands in glee at the state of the public finances and the drastic remedies proposed by all parties. There's gold in them thar spending cuts programmes!

The recent experience of Imperial Healthcare Trust, which is an amalgamation of St Mary's, Paddington, Charing Cross and three other hospitals, shows the eye-watering fees available. In just five months up to August, McKinsey was paid £1.565m to advise the trust on how to reduce costs. This, says an insider, "involves a McKinsey 'facilitator' standing in a room of trust managers as they brainstorm cost-cutting ideas and then presenting them to the board as their own work".

So whose idea was it to bring in the million-pound clipboard carriers (respecting the rules on tendering, Imperial points out)? Step forward Imperial "chief financial officer" Tony Graff, brought in last September on £250,000 a year even though the trust already had, and still has, a qualified £160,000-a-year finance director.

Graff, without a recognized finance qualification but the proud owner of an American MBA, was brought in for his experience "building commercial partnerships and generating significant investment". And where did he get most of that experience? Over a long career as a consultant until 1996 at McKinsey (followed by Pizza Hut and furniture chain MFI). Just the man to decide how the health service should spend what's left of its money.

PS: As the man with, in Imperial's words, "overall responsibility for financial resources of the trust", Graff might be concerned about another of the *Eye's* favourite NHS outfits, the Parkhill Audit Agency (see revelations in the last two *Eyes* of dubious charging and big payments for bosses under contracts awarded without competition). Although a shared operation among a number of trusts, Imperial hosts and takes responsibility for it. A spokeswoman said Imperial "is currently reviewing their position with the trust".

HEALTHCARE

US and them

YET another American healthcare firm which is opposed to the idea of state-funded healthcare in the US is picking up lucrative business from Britain's NHS.

Like UnitedHealth (see *Eyes* 1244 & 1245), in America the US firm Aetna has been campaigning hard against President Obama's "public option" for healthcare while saying thank you very much for a £3.5m, two-year "partnering" contract in Britain with South Birmingham NHS Trust.

Despite Obama's modest ambitions, Ron Williams, Aetna's $18m a year boss, regularly appears on US TV to tell Americans it is fundamentally wrong for the US government to provide healthcare because "when you have a government plan, you have in essence a player in the industry who is a participant in the market, but also is a regulator and a referee in the game…"

Aetna's deal in Birmingham means it is involved in advising on both commissioning and providing services. It runs a "Care Well" phone advice service for people with long-term conditions including asthma, dementia, epilepsy, pulmonary disease, diabetes, coronary artery diseases and hypertension. And it offers a free "Wii" console to Brummies who take up its advice.

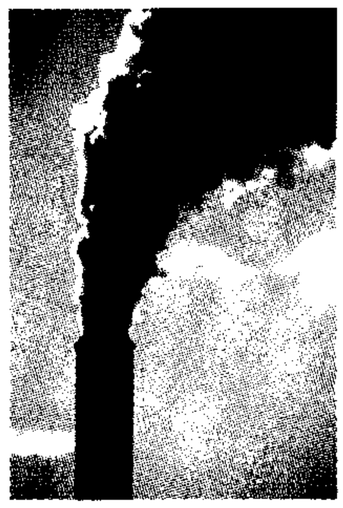
In the US Aetna grew massively by buying up other health firms, but found that the 21m insured people it took on who were demanding medical care were causing profits to tank. Williams was appointed to chase away badly performing accounts, which he did, said to the *Wall Street Journal*, by losing 8m customers who "are visiting emergency rooms too much for non-emergency reasons, such as for the flu or a sprained ankle".

WASTE INCINERATION

A burning issue

BACK in May *Eye* 1235 revealed a worrying conflict of interest around a controversial incinerator project on a contaminated former coalworks near Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

Developer Cyclamax had called in a company called Encia to complete its "environmental statement" for the so-called "Sheepbridge Resource Park". The *Eye* pointed out that a) Encia is in fact Cyclamax's sister company; and that b) Encia was part of a team that allowed developer Countryside Properties to claim of a housing development on the site of a former asbestos plant in Rochdale: "Of particular note is the absence of any asbestos contamination" (*Eye* 1129). After the *Eye* pointed out that this assessment was the reverse of the truth, Countryside and Encia scarpered.



After *Eye* 1235 appeared, Derbyshire county council was desperate to discover who our sources were. Council minutes state that "The *Public Eye* [*sic*] report was allegedly written by objectors" [*wrong* – Ed], before concluding that "it is difficult to remove the perception of damage to health". Quite.

Though the Sheepbridge scheme is being sold as "green" – making a 14 percent contribution to Chesterfield's renewable energy target – there is little chance that the "perception of damage to health" will disappear; not least because there are 19 schools and 30,000 people living within a two-mile radius of the site's chimney.

Cyclamax's "gasification" technology is purchased from US firm Waste2Energy Holdings, whose track record doesn't inspire confidence. Earlier this year when W2E merged with Maven Media Holdings, a summary of the business was made available. It said: "Our independent registered auditors have expressed substantial doubt about our ability to continue as a going concern… there can be no assurance that our procedures will prevent environmental damage occurring from spills of materials handled by the company or that such damage has not already occurred… on occasion, substantial liabilities to third parties may be incurred".

W2E's founder is Christopher d'Arnaud-Taylor, named with others as a defendant in a class action lawsuit alleging "insider trading" and making "materially false and misleading statements" in a previous business venture in 2006. Though the case was settled with no admission of guilt, it's unlikely to do much for people's "perceptions" in Chesterfield.

Trashy idea

AMERICAN waste-incineration firm Covanta is hoping to break into the UK market with plans for "energy-from-waste" (EfW) plants in Cheshire, Bedfordshire and Wales. But has the firm burned its bridges in the US?

Covanta runs dozens of garbage-fired power plants in the US where it has an alarming record for safety and environmental breaches. For example, it has been repeatedly fined over toxic emissions; and earlier this year the American Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued citations against it for breaking fire safety rules and "maintaining" electrical equipment using, er, duct tape and cardboard.

Last year Covanta was fined by Pennsylvania state authorities for excessive emissions of nickel; by Florida state for dioxin and furan emissions; and by Massachusetts environmental protection chiefs for dioxin emissions. Previous years saw fines levied in Virginia and New Jersey.

According to the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), an inspection of the Rochester plant in New York State in October 2008, found that Covanta had improperly stored oxygen and fuel gas cylinders side-by-side on a welding cart with no barrier between them. And this May, the US National Labor Relations Board charged Covanta Energy with violating labour law at 46 Covanta locations, after employees were forbidden from discussing their wages or other information the company claimed to be "confidential", and from providing any information about Covanta to "outside representatives" without management permission.

The UWUA has alerted UK unions to the company's record. The GMB says Covanta, "doesn't inspire the kind of confidence that should be expected in a company competing for a major contract". But that's exactly what it is doing. In Merthyr Tydfil Covanta is planning to burn 750,000 tonnes of waste a year in a 70 megawatt EfW power station next to the already controversial Ffos-y-Fran opencast mine.

In Cheshire, Covanta did not make the county council's shortlist for a PFI waste contract, but it still plans to press ahead with an EfW plant on a Middlewich industrial estate which it claims will result in cheaper electricity for locals. Meanwhile Buckinghamshire county council has formed a "waste disposal partnership" with Covanta, which plans a 600,000-tonne incinerator near Stewartby, in neighbouring central Bedfordshire by 2014. The incinerator is opposed by Central Beds council, but as the scheme counts as a power station, the planning application will go before the new national Infrastructure Planning Commission, rather than the local authority.

Gordian Notts

MORE on waste firm Veolia's battle to stop the public seeing details of its PFI waste deals with Nottinghamshire county council (see Rotten Boroughs, *Eye* 1247; & In the Back, *Eye* 1242).

The French multinational has an £800m PFI contract to handle the county's waste, which it wanted to extend with a linked PFI contract for an incinerator in Sherwood Forest.

Anti-incinerator campaigner Shlomo Dowen used the Audit Commission Act to ask to see paperwork relating to the contracts, believing it would reveal the PFI deal to be terrible value for money. However, Veolia temporarily stopped the council releasing documents with an injunction, recently overturned at judicial review by Mr Justice Cranston.

The judge's ruling was widely seen as a victory for the public's right to know how its money is spent, and Veolia appeared to accept the ruling. Its director Steve Mitchell said: "The company accepts the judgment of the court; the situation has now been clarified and we do not plan to appeal."

However, the firm now appears to have had a change of heart. The original case concerned sample financial schedules, which have duly been released to Dowen. He presumed these "disputed" documents were merely a test case, and after the ruling he asked Notts to release all the papers he had requested. When the council appeared to be about to agree, Veolia threatened it with yet more legal action. It asked Judge Cranston for leave to appeal, which was refused; and now seems set on asking a higher official for an appeal and has halted the release of further papers. Veolia's spokesman said it wanted to stop the exposure of "very sensitive commercial information that is helpful to our competitors". So much for the public's right to know how its money is spent.

In the City

THE great economist John Maynard Keynes highlighted the reversal of roles between borrower and banker the bigger the loan.

Owe £1,000 and you are at the banker's mercy; owe £1m and he is at yours – an early version of the too-big-to-fail theory that bailed out the world's biggest and greediest banks.

The phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed and the taxpayer-controlled Royal Bank of Scotland would also seem to demonstrate this particular bit of Keynesian wisdom.

Fayed's Paris Ritz hotel still owes RBS £96m, which it was due to repay last May. But the company seemingly could not and so did not repay the loan on the due date. The reason would seem to be its inability to refinance that repayment and further finance required for a planned major refurbishment.

The latest Ritz accounts, filed a month ago, reveal that discussions on a new loan took place not just with RBS but also with "a number of other banks with a view to arranging for a revised facility". However, now "these discussions have been deferred until more normal levels of bank liquidity become available following the credit crunch crisis that commenced in 2008".

RBS and its main shareholder would no doubt have liked to see that £96m repaid. But the Ritz does not have that kind of cash and Fayed was presumably unable or unwilling to make funds available from elsewhere – assuming they were available given the existing debts, particularly to RBS, but also other banks secured on the Harrods and Park Lane properties and Fulham FC.

So the loan has been rolled over for six months until mid-November, when the plan is to agree a further extension for another six months or year. "This pattern of rollovers is expected to continue until conditions exist for the refinancing to be achieved," admits a note to the accounts. As at a month ago the discussions with RBS had not been concluded. However, the directors say they are satisfied that a deal will be achieved.

They were also confident back in December that the refinancing would happen in May, and had received assurances from the two Fayed family companies that own the Ritz that "in the event of financial support being required to meet the obligations under the terms of the current loan agreement, then such financial support will be made available".

As RBS would not want to find itself running the Ritz, it can be assumed that a deal to defer repayment will be reached next month – in the same way that RBS, not wanting to run a football club, has extended its much greater exposure to Liverpool FC. Back in July, RBS and the similarly rescued US bank Wachovia agreed to extend their loan to Liverpool for another 12 months after struggling American owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett agreed to pump in £60m to cut the debt to £290m from £350m. The loan had initially been due in January.

So the taxpayer is still on the hook for both the prestigious Paris Ritz and the Premier League club, although buyers would exist for both at a price in extremis.

Meanwhile, the bank will be receiving a higher interest rate and retains as security both the hotel properties and the Fayed family's shares in the Ritz company.

The discussions about the extended loan mean that for a second year running the Ritz accounts contain an "emphasis of matter" note from auditors KPMG. They do not qualify the accounts but point up that these have been produced on a "going concern" basis assuming the revenue and cash-flow projections made by the directors, and that a deal to extend the loan will get done.

A small increase in turnover last year resulted in a big jump in profits to €5.6m. But the forecast is for a fall in revenues this year. Not surprising, given the outlook for premium travel.

Fayed companies are among RBS's biggest borrowers. The bank led a refinancing deal in 2006 with a syndicated loan on which some £630m is still owed, with £550m not due until 2016 secured on the Harrods and other properties. As Keynes said – owe £1m or £100m and that becomes the bank's problem.

STUNG perhaps by the "Air Miles Andy" tag and constant pictures of him and helicopters or executive jets, the Duke of York has been busy giving interviews to the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times* defending not just himself but bankers' bonuses and "non-dom" tax avoiders.

After all, he spends a lot of time with such targets and they often pick up those travel bills not paid by the taxpayer through UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), the government agency for which he acts as a special representative, aka travelling salesman.

One multinational no doubt glad of his help has been mining giant Rio Tinto. The Duke has made three trips to Mongolia since 2006 designed in part to encourage an agreement on the enormous Oyu Tolgoi copper/gold prospect in the Gobi desert. After five years of delays, especially caused by adverse tax arrangements proposed in 2006, a deal was finally signed by the Mongolians earlier this month.

Another party who can now celebrate is Ivanhoe Mines, the Canadian company that found Oyu Tolgoi and brought in Rio Tinto to fund the $4bn mine. The Duke met representatives of Ivanhoe on his three visits to Mongolia in 2006, 2007 and last year.

But then he knows one Ivanhoe director very well. Banker Robert Hanson, son of the late Lord H, is a long-standing and regular social contact. Hanson has been an Ivanhoe director and shareholder since 2001. Ivanhoe's main

"I see your bonus came through"

shareholder is Robert "Toxic Bob" Friedland, nicknamed as a result of a massive cyanide spill at a Californian mine in the early 90s, which was seen as one of the largest environment disasters in recent US history.

But Hanson is not the only link the Duke enjoys with Ivanhoe. The Canadian company has a gold mine in Kazakhstan – another country HRH has visited even more frequently both on behalf of UKTI and privately. He has been entertained there by President Nazarbayev and his circle. Prince Andrew and Nazarbayev are patrons of the British-Kazakh Society.

Friedland had been involved with the Bakyrchik gold mine since 1996 but the project was subject to problems and delays. Then, a year ago, with the gold price rising, a deal was done to get the mine back into production. Ivanhoe emerged with 49 percent of a joint venture, Altynalmas Gold, with three local Kazakh partners. The green light suggested that those local partners had political influence locally.

And so they do. One of them was named as Medoro Partners, and a company of the same name is linked to the Duke's high-profile Kazakh-born friend, socialite and fixer Gaukhar "Goga" Ashkenazi, with whom he was photographed at Ascot in 2007. London-based "Goga" runs MMG Global Consulting, which is owned by Medoro Partners Inc. "Goga" in turn has a child by Kazakh tycoon Timur Kulibayev, Nazarbayev's son-in-law. And Kulibayev is suspected of being the mystery purchaser of the Duke's Sunninghill Park home for an over-the-odds £15m in 2007. No doubt all a happy coincidence for Ivanhoe Mines and the Duke of York.

HOW times change. Back in late September the British high commissioner in Cyprus, Peter Millett, visited the offices of the *Kibris* newspaper in northern Cyprus, the Turkish-controlled section of the island whose government is not recognised by Britain or anybody else outside Turkey.

What was so unusual about that? Well, the Kibris media group is associated with long-standing fugitive Asil Nadir of Polly Peck fame. Nadir has been on the run from the Serious Farce Office since 1993. "Kibris" reported Millett's interview with executives of the newspaper on reunification and other political issues but did not mention whether its proprietor was present. After all, Polly Peck was a long time ago.

PLANET FOOTBALL – HULL CITY

THE Premier League strugglers have finally managed to produce their much-delayed accounts for the year to July 2008 – the season they were promoted.

The reason for the delay is clear from the smallprint. The club and its associated Superstadium companies controlled by Essex property man Russell Bartlett, confirmed as the real owner, face a fight not just to avoid relegation

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

but also to survive financially.

Hull City must repay bank loans of at least £22m, the figure in July 2008, by July next year, and to keep within its agreed banking facilities it has to generate a surplus of £23m from match revenues, TV and player trading or new loans over the next 12 months. For 2008 the club lost £10m and says there was an unaudited profit of £2m for last season. So generating £23m seems even more challenging than avoiding relegation. And if the drop is avoided then the club will need to find possible extra funding of £16m for next season. This could be reduced by £7m if the club can accelerate the Premier League payments it would be due.

Auditor Deloitte, while not qualifying the accounts, leaves creditors and fans in no doubt about the dangers. The accounts have been produced on a "going concern" basis for the 12 months from mid-October. But because of the need to repay the bank loans, the risk of failing to find new finance and the possibility of relegation, Deloitte concludes that "these conditions indicate the existence of a material uncertainty which may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern". In other words, it may not survive the 12 months.

The accounts for Tiger Holdings – through which Bartlett bought the club for £7m in June 2007 – also reveal that Hull City may have financed its own takeover, as Tiger owed the club £3.2m at July 2008, which has no repayment date and pays no interest! Hull City has agreed not to demand repayment for at least the next 12 months.

Bartlett is revealed as the ultimate owner of the club via Isis Nominees in Jersey. Why such an offshore structure exists – Bartlett appeared briefly as a Tiger director this summer but was then replaced by two Jersey-based nominees – is unclear, but tax may have something to do with it. Especially should the club be sold.

Meanwhile Deloitte, not surprisingly, warns that there is a similar "material uncertainty" over Tiger's ability to survive as a "going concern" for the next 12 months because of its reliance on Hull City for working capital.

Tiger also owed £2m interest-free to Bartlett's Superstadium Holdings, which he has agreed not to demand for 12 months. But then Bartlett's R3 Investment Group owes Tiger almost as much, also with no repayment date and no interest. And R3 invested £4m in Tiger preference shares that part-financed the purchase of the club. These have no redemption date. But with total net assets of £100, this is not likely any day soon.

Superstadium Holdings owns Superstadium Management, which runs Hull City's KC stadium. But as the club provides half the revenues for the management company – the rugby league club provides the other half – both these Bartlett companies are also subject to the same "material uncertainty". Hull City pays rent to Management. But as at July 2008 the club owed Management £1m while Holdings owed Management more than £1.2m.

This network of interlocking shareholdings and inter-company loans all going back to Bartlett, who bought Hull City off the back of the now vanished property boom, looks like a classic case of football hubris funded by rickety financial engineering.

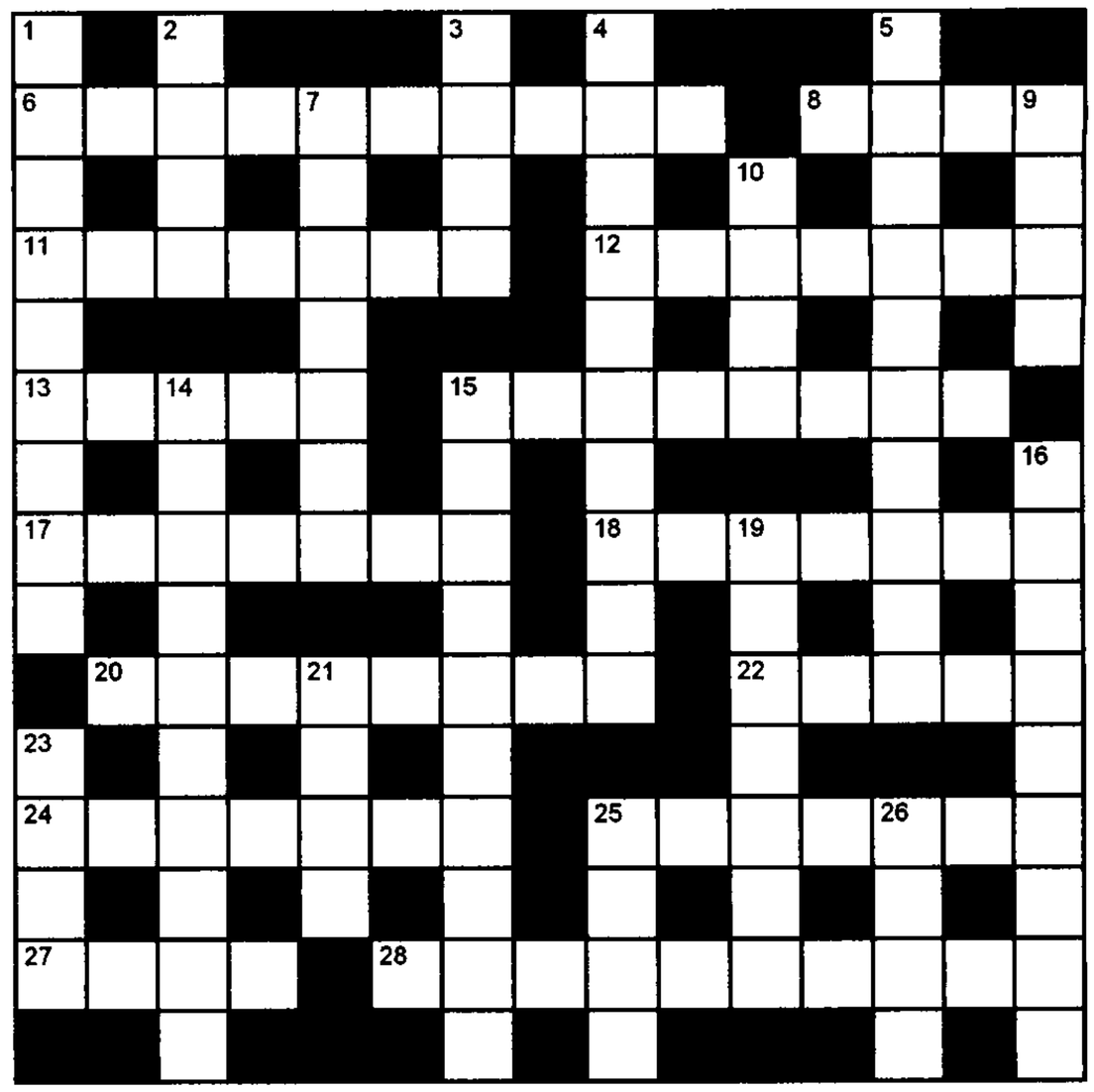
Superstadium Holdings owed £1m to Bartlett and another £600,000 to R3 at July 2008. But more importantly it owed £3.4m to RBS, in addition to the £22m owed mainly to Investec by Hull City. Investec's £22m is due next year. The bank registered a new debenture last August. The RBS loans were also due but were renewed in August and now are repayable over three years, with a charge on the assets and a personal guarantee from Bartlett. Holdings' assets are its shares in Management and the £2m owed by Tiger!

So the taxpayer is on the hook for yet another Premier League club! Hull City is just like relegation rival Portsmouth – with whom the team managed an anemic draw last weekend – only without a Saudi "saviour".

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 402

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 October 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

6 Mug putting money in the bank – like the actions of politician after ballsing up? (4-6)

8/3 Electorate once embracing Gordon's debut – unpleasant after-effects! (8)

11 Once, Di's last bits of cash grabbed by Charles and mother finally (7)

12 Tarts would hold one in motorised caravan for johns (7)

13/15ac. The PM, "pants" according to Obama – such times are very scary (5,8)

17 Erection's occurred, but makes a mess of it (5,2)

18 Blow lid on useless, naff Conservative leaders – "surplus to requirements" (7)

20 Windy thing destroying article about "finish of Cameron" (8)

22 Political body that's no stranger to spin (5)

24 Under the table, sex all used up? (3,2,2)

25 Light shining round hole produces ridicule (7)

27 See 10dn.

28 Snooker event well behind? Get lost! (4,2,4)

DOWN

1 Quick gain – throw up after a diet! (1,4,4)

2 Cane remedy for adolescent outbursts (4)

3 See 8ac.

4 Manufactured item ready for sale is shit? (3,7)

5 "Cabbie stress" Cyclops had, flower (4,6)

7 Deputies such as Prescott's post-dessert treat? (7)

9 See 25dn.

10/27 Awful, what peers do with a no. 2 (Brown's no. 2) (4-4)

14 Kissing so, with an erection, copper mounts Joy, topless (10)

15 Do this with Brown and row will ensue (3,3,4)

16 Could be Brucie's now kissing butts of Arlene and partner (9)

19 Er, short knight in lacy creation, mud-slinging (7)

21 Labour's last uncertainty: time for a split (4)

23 Shit, shit! Palin's only just started! (4)

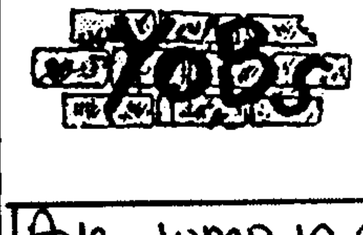
25/9 To endure flatulence, pee at the final second (4-4)

26 Gore on recycling can be a bit of a bastard (4)

Crossword 401 winner: J. JAMES (Paignton)

ACROSS: 7 Ghoul 8 Beach ball 9 Better off 10 Tasty 11 Hits out 12 Nostril 20 Eardrop 21 Who's who 23/15 Jimmy Riddle 25 Wait for it 27 Hoodwinks 28 Erect.

DOWN: 2/22 Blue-collar worker 3 Half-one 5 Bass drum 6 Play 7 Gab 8 Blotto 11/4 Horse shit 13 School fees 14 Lasso 16 Dartmoor 18 Upswing 19 Swains 23/17 John Thomas 24 Yawn 26/1 Tit for tat.



HUSBAND

Brennan JB7

Good news for CD owners

British company re-invents the HiFi

"Mr Brennan you are a genius. The JB7 is truly a wonderful thing. I have only owned mine for two days but already it feels like an old friend. I admire its simplicity of operation, its range of functions, its unobtrusive size, and the quality of sound simply delights me. It's all I could wish for. Thank you. Kind Regards"

When Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7 he threw out the rule book. The Brennan is a CD player with a hard disk that stores up to 5,000 CDs. It saves space and clutter and delivers near immediate access to an entire music collection. Customers rediscover/fall in love with their music again simply because the Brennan makes it so accessible.

The Brennan also records from vinyl and cassette so you can enjoy your entire music collection but keep it out of the way in another room or retire it to the attic.

You can use the JB7 in two ways. You can use it with loudspeakers or you can play it through your existing HiFi. The Brennan gives names to tracks and albums from a database of 2.6 million CDs as you load each CD. It takes a few minutes to load a CD.

Small enough to pick up with one hand. Big enough for a lifetime of music.

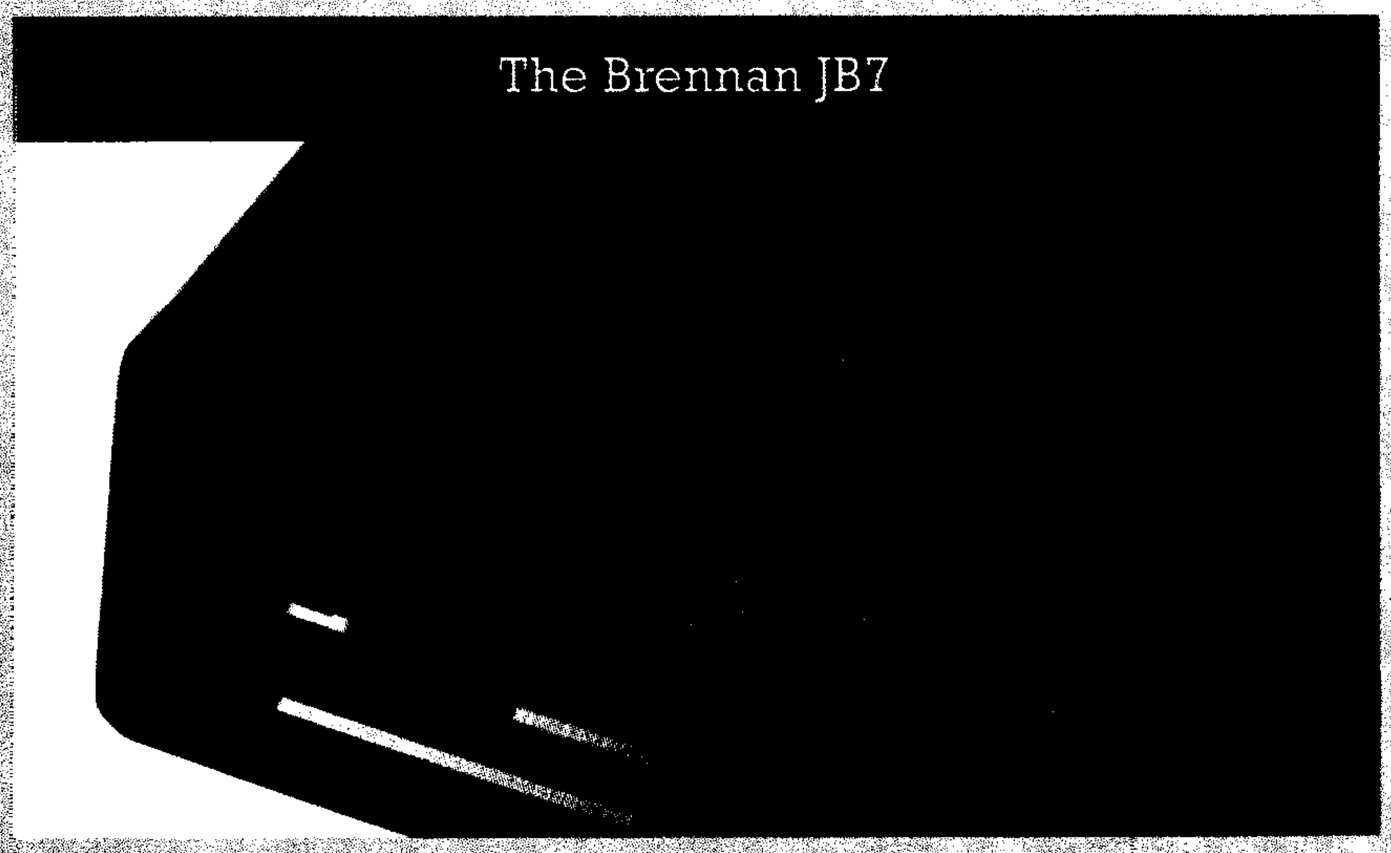
The Brennan has a unique text search facility that shows a reducing number of matches as you press successive letters on the remote control. Once you get the hang of it you can find one track or album out of your entire music collection in a few seconds. So to find "Nessun Dorma" you would press letters "NES" or "DOR" and scroll through the shortlist of matches.

What's the point owning CDs you don't Play?

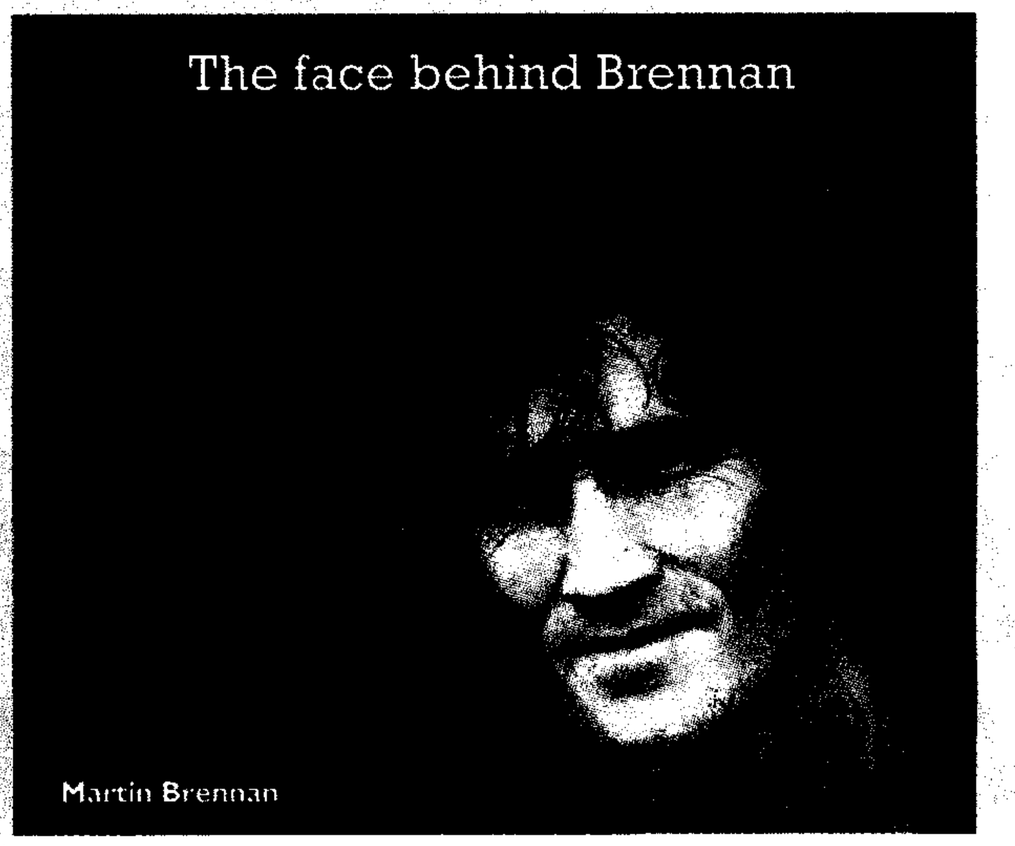
What's the point in owning hundreds of CDs worth thousands of pounds if you never listen to them? The problem with CDs is that it's quicker to make a cup of coffee than dip into a CD. Try timing how long it takes to pick a CD, load it in the CD player, play a snippet from a track or two, eject it and put it back where it came from. Then there is the problem of finding music. The print on a CD spine is tiny. What if the track is on a compilation CD? What if the CD is in the car? Then there is the clutter. You need to keep your CDs near the player or you wont play them. So you are forced to share your living space with hundreds of cheap plastic boxes.

CDs are great but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore - thats why Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7.

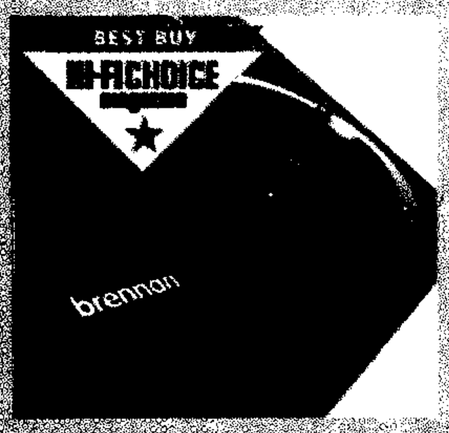
The Brennan JB7



The face behind Brennan



Martin Brennan



Key Points

Three sizes - up to 5000 CDs

• One button plays the entire collection at random • Text search finds tracks/ albums/ artists in seconds • Browse albums by spinning the volume knob • Display tracks by name as they play • Load CDs in about four minutes • 2.6 million album database - updated monthly • Seven rainbow colour coded playlists •180 x 32 soft scrolling vacuum fluorescent display • Segue function blends one track into the next • One touch record from vinyl, cassette or radio • Loads and plays MP3 from USB • Remote control or front panel • Volume knob pushes to use as a selector • Delete tracks you don't like • Clock with alarm • 60 Watt power amplifier • 4.8 x 16 x 22 cm steel and aluminium construction • Small and tough enough if you are on the move • Used by restaurants, hotels, pubs, dentists, schools • Sold to more than 30 Countries • Backup music to external USB hard disk for safe keeping • "Superb" - Gramophone • "Best Buy" - HiFi Choice • "Huge fun to use...a great talking point" - Daily Mail • Choice of colours Navy Blue or Gun Metal • Optional matching loudspeakers • Prices from £329

"Huge fun to use... a great talking point"
Daily Mail

To get the whole story and order visit www.brennan.co.uk

Martin is a physicist and computer engineer. He has around twenty silicon chips to his name, written over a million lines of computer code and co-designed the world's first 64 bit games computer.

"I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi changer. My second was a ten CD changer for the car. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. These players were fine but a bit clunky - there were several seconds of silence between CDs and in the car I could never find the right CD.

A few years ago I had a go at loading my cassette collection onto a PC. Cassette were obsolete but I owned around 100 and the music on them reflected an important period in my life. I recorded all of the cassettes on to the PC over a period of several weeks.

The thing is I never listened to the music on the PC. Somehow using the computer to listen to music never worked out. Maybe the computer was in the wrong place but I think it lacked the immediacy of a physical play button. In the end the computer got a virus and the music files were lost - I still had the cassettes thankfully. The JB7 is really my personal ideal music player".

OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark clothing revolution for men and women

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from Mr. Raja M Daswani of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for suits, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is Mr. Daswani, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

THE BRITISH CLOTHING CHAIN STORE HAS MUCH TO FEAR FROM MR. DASWAN

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£29 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on Savile Row.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings h to the UK as often as once a month. He a his team take over hotel suites in major citi so British customers can make appointment and get the full Kowlo Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are tak here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, yc suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 mil away before you've even left the hotel. Y can have it couriered within a week or so, wait for a second fitting when the Raja te hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the R revolution, with its inspired mix of artis flair, entrepreneurial genius and digi technology, will see the end of t off-the-peg British chain store suit. On pri alone, it's a sartorial solution that will ev please the Suits in accounts.

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Please ask for Raja Fashions or Mr. Daswani's suite when you arrive at the Hotel

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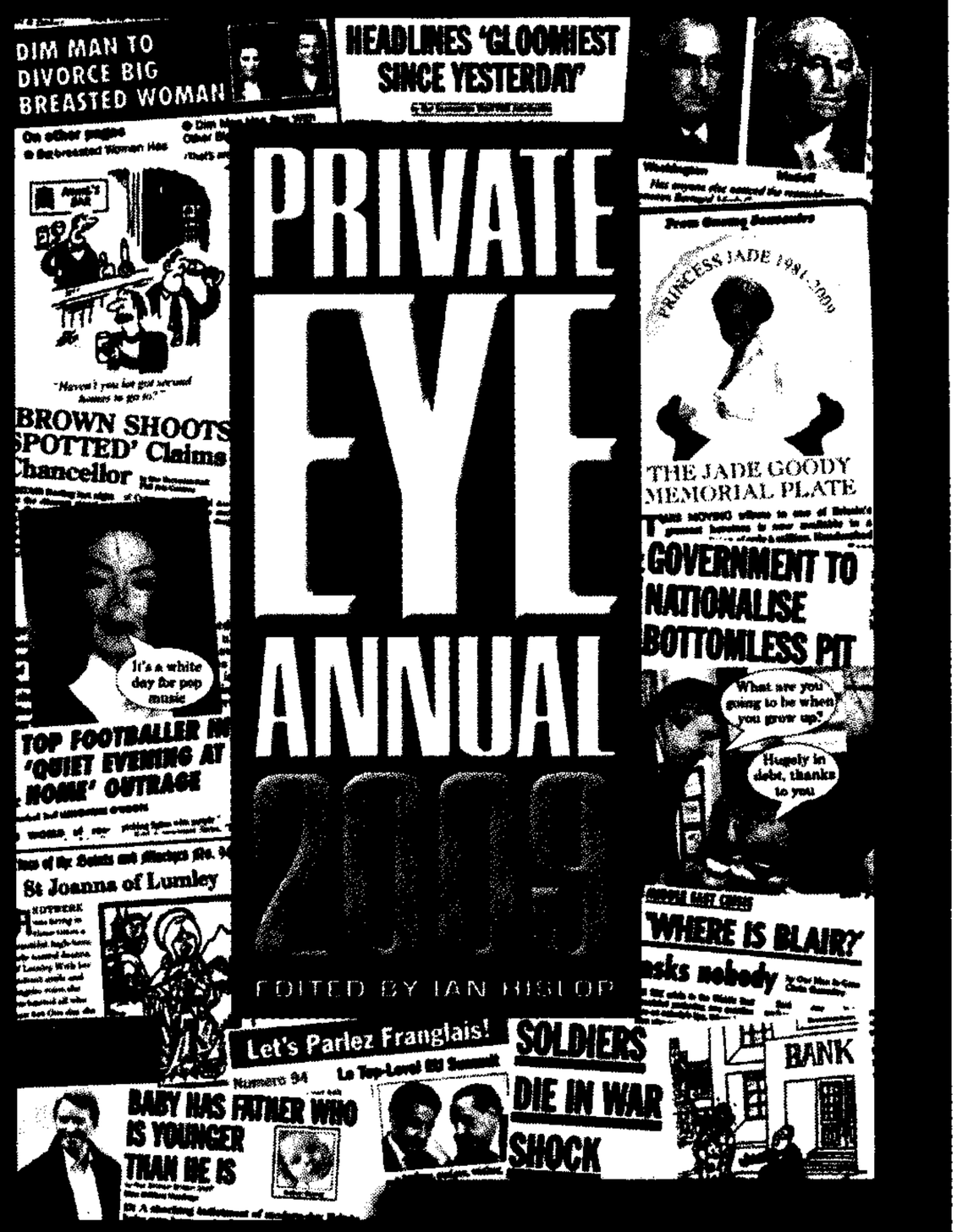
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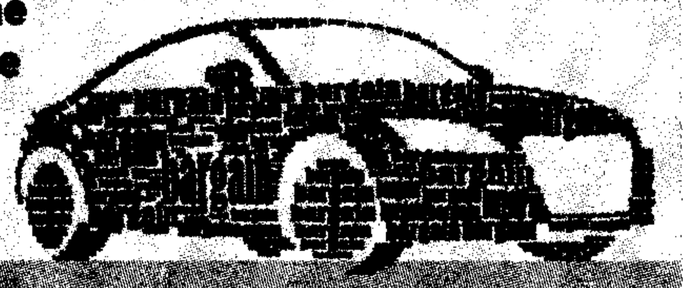

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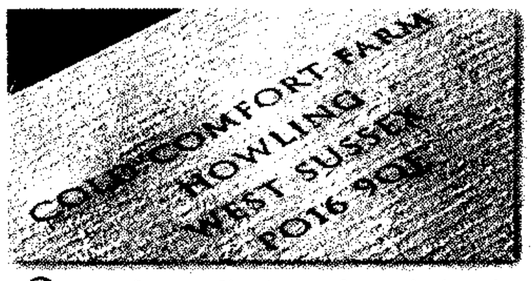

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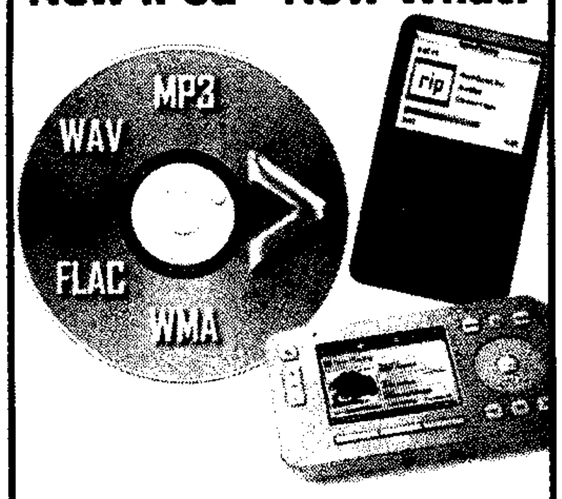

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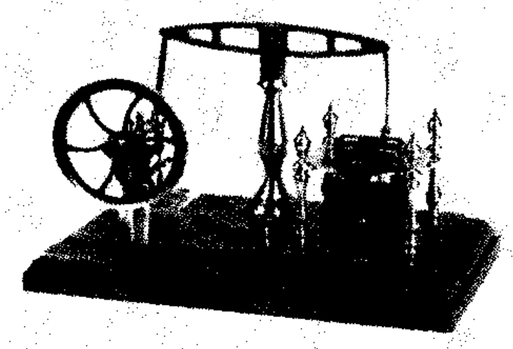

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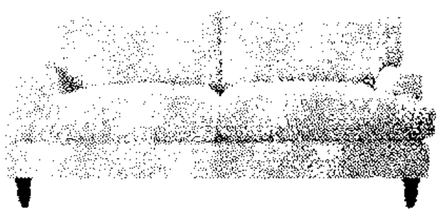

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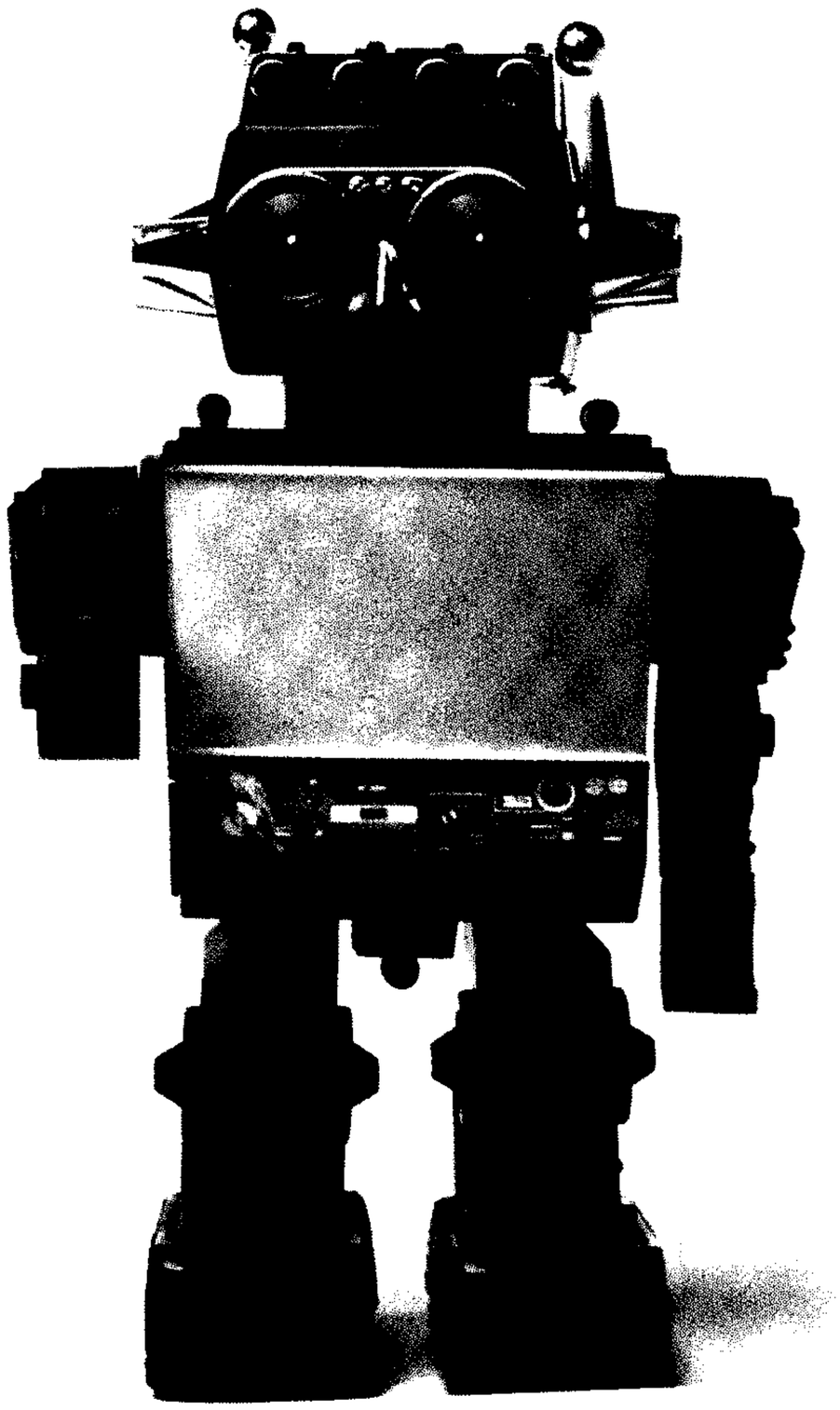

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